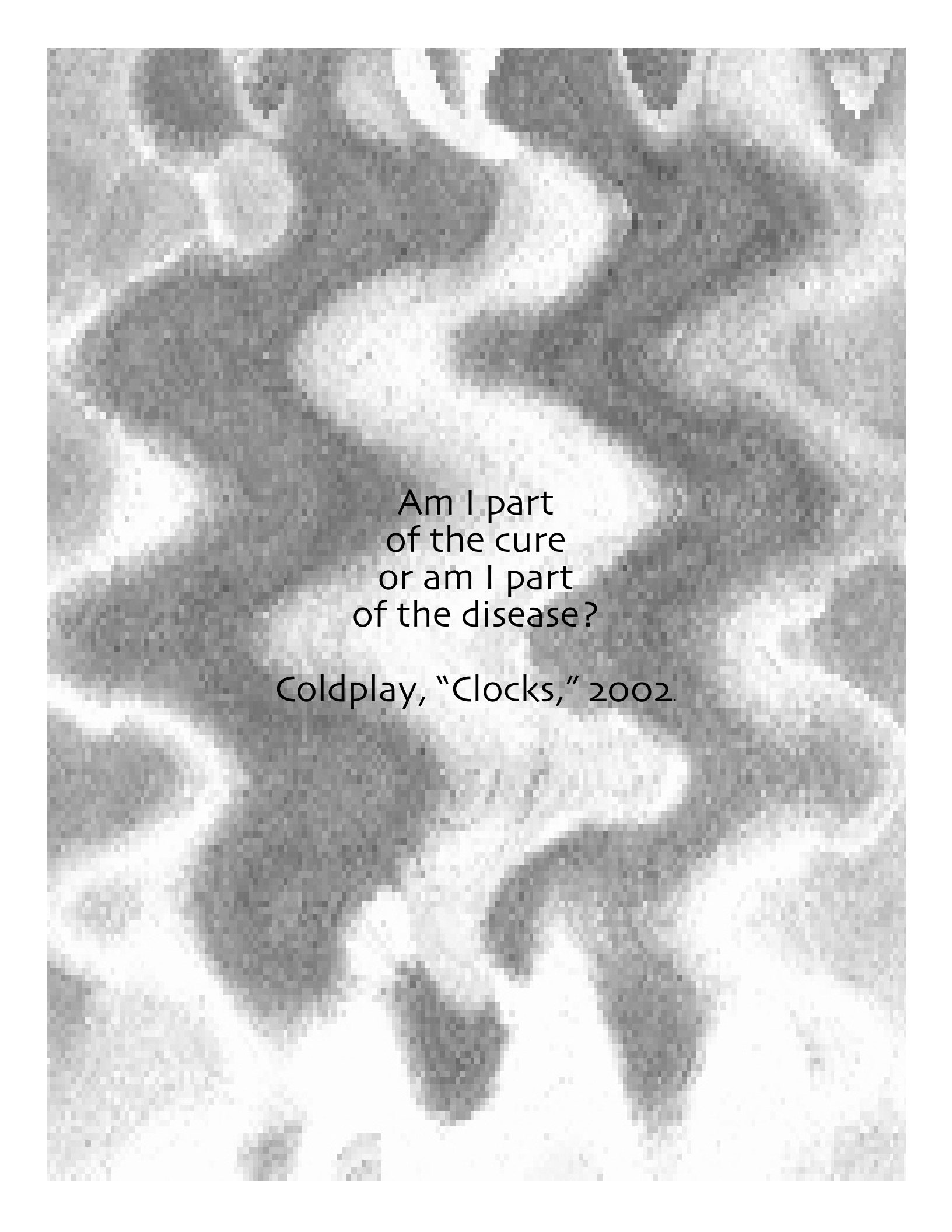


The Cénacle



Number 51-52 • Winter 2004



Am I part
of the cure
or am I part
of the disease?

Coldplay, "Clocks," 2002.

From Soulard's Notebooks

March 15, 2004

7:21 a.m.

Burger King-my table

Hartford, Ct.

My Dearest Kassidawn,
Travel days & 3000 miles & yet
end up back here, but then I remem-
ber last night you sending me job posting
for Seattle Weekly & how I responded to it
immediately - how as much as you & I were
before last week, we are vastly more now -
I feel changed - I feel like whatever the
effort I'm going to leave Ct. for good this
time - & not alone this time -

I didn't find Jerry's home too bad
when I returned - he'd clearly kept things
up - effort visible in washed dishes &
put-away beer bottles - his life rattles ~~still~~
within still - & Kass, I still hold out some
~~thing~~ ^{thing} for him - where there's life there's
hope -

Time to get the train & along to
the Advocate, hoping I return to some
respect, ready to be flexible or hard
depending on what I find -

I love you, wife ;

-7-

1:26 p.m.
Yale Bookstore
cafe-my table
New Haven, CT.

- On a normal Monday in recent months I would be partway through my lunch from the Advocate, not having sat here for several hours -
Alas - job gone - my last day sitting here for awhile, maybe ever - read p. 399 to 472 of Stephen King's Wolves of Calla - will read the rest some other place & way -

I'm holding on in these most frail hours before a new effort begins - holding on & I hope readying to go at this new joblessness -

But I'll miss my lunch hours here, & certain moments at that job - it's so frustrating, so much effort & then it's bloodlessly over -

Well - time to use restroom & move on - Kassi, our calls this morning were saving - kept me from darkness -

4:04 p.m.
Koffee Too?
New Haven, CT.

^{this afternoon}
- Having decided to go to ~~the~~ Seattle, I'd go tonight if I could - but it will take some planning - I just can't see waiting & spending more months begging this sorry ass state for work - luck it -

It's time to prepare to go - details pour in - money, job hunting, cheapest digs possible, hooking up with my friends there - availing myself of their generosity & desire to help without taking advantage of them or alienating them -

Kassi, I feel a kind of hope that I haven't in too long -

timetable presses: when? a plan needs time to launch much less carry out - OK - funny it happens about a year after I came here - as I was feeling ever greater trapped - but now I'm not - if I can collect unemployment then doing this would work much better -

a chance at returning & succeeding - at making up for how wrongly it went last time -

-9-

Knowing you're in this with me
Means everything to me, Kassi - that
eventually I won't be alone in making things
work -

As long as my struggle remained in
CT., I couldn't be happy. But I know
Seattle, my months there remain live in
me - it matters as this state no longer does -

The frustration recedes even as the
challenge looms - ideally I'll find a
cheap rooming house to stay at - my friend
Ric years ago was at the Panama Hotel -
what would constitute affordable? Ques-
tions assemble themselves.

I'll get a one-way ticket, Hartford-
to-Seattle, bring my suitcase of clothes,
notebooks, iPod, computer files in some
form -

This letter has traveled crazy
far in a few hours & pages but,
OK, sometimes life turns on a dime -
the hard, high wall of frustration can be
breached - this can & will work - when
I get on the bus to Seattle I do not

-10-

intend ever again to do other than visit
this state - when settled I'll come back
for my things, or store them more perma-
nently, ^{make} some sort of provision more sure
& safe than now -

When last in Seattle I was so clouded
with difficulty, so sad & confused & over-
whelmed I stood no real chance - yet I
learned a great deal & it wasn't a wasted
experience -

But I felt a failure, & this feeling has
never left me - every day I feel it - now
CT's rude treatment has forced my hand -
fare - I'm sweet with fear & hope -

8:05 p.m.
Tahduli Theatre
Wallingford, Ct

- Not been here before, come to see
Neil Young & Crazy Horse, seen em many
times, must see Jim, where is he? Were
both high as fuck
here "X"

-11-

March 16, 2004
11:59 p.m.
Milford Street-bed
Plainville, CT.

-Well, OK, my first jobless day in months & I spent it making corrections & finding things out - not bad as could be - simply not - I think I'd be smart to make a list (lists, huh!) of what was done & needs doing -

Right now ^{assembling} ~~dubbing~~ Master of C49
Ellice Guild highlights tape - the work slowly resumes & goes on -

Seattle will become home again sooner than expected - chance to redeem myself there - by my birthday would be very nice - very nice from 6 weeks away perspective -

I hope by when you get this letter progress since its conclusion will be evident - I hope I always do right by us ☺ I love you, KD ☺
Raymond

The Cenacle

Number 51-52 • Winter 2004

Edited by Raymond Souland, Jr. 

Assistant Editor: Kassandra Kramer

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SCRIPTOR PRESS

HEY AMERICA...

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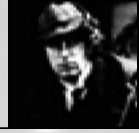
Accompanying cassette features highlights from the December 29, 2001 Jellicle Guild (R.I.P. 1988-2001) meeting held at Roma Restaurant in New Britain, CT.

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Thank you to the *New Haven Advocate* for deciding to replace my editor's position with a college not-for-pay intern and freelance no-benefits-involved freelancers. Your decision to choose budget-cutting over the progressive human values you profess to support led me & my partner Cassandra to find a way, finally, West. Bite my shiny metal ass . . .

...PULL MY FINGER.

G. C. Dillon



The Cat and the Moon

*Queen and Huntress, chaste and fair,
Now the sun is laid to sleep,
Seated in thy silver chair,
State in wonted manner keep,
Hesperus entreats thy light,
Goddess, excellent and bright.*

— Ben Jonson, 1609.

There is a tall tale told in every harbor of the land of dreams; it is repeated by swaggering seamen, sweating stevedores, and the odd harbormaster or two. It is said that if a man were ever to see the lofty spires of Shandaloor from the banks of Censwadd, the Great Southern Lake, he may then die a happy man. Perhaps it is true of women as well. One need only ask Z'Harizaam.

If one could.

Where the long Eastern canals empty into the Censwadd, and the great engineering feat of the Western Locks begin the long, meandering journey to the Cerenarian Sea, the city of Shandaloor hosts its grand bazaar. Shandaloor was an ancient city surrounded by crumbling walls—walls built not by men, nor by the other creatures that today made it their home. And it was many a being that slept within these aged castellations. From the cat-like M'rrr, to the tall and slender Elvish folk or many of humanity's ethnic clans, all worked, hoped, and lived their dreams in the harbor-city.

Khym Te Yung, a visitor to Shandaloor and a merchant sailor from the fabled Eastern lands, sat in a silk covered kiosk. A long ponytail hung down his back and carefully trimmed mustachios fell about his chin. He wore a black jerkin, jodhpurs and a green vest. He dripped drops of yellowed beeswax onto the folds of parchments, and then placed his hoary father's signet ring into the wax. After sealing the papers with his sign, he sat back in the kiosk. Khym called over an elderly brewster and bought from the old woman one of the city's rich pumpkin ales. He sipped the piquant drink happily. The parchment contained the manifest for his ship, *Dawn Breaker*. She would be sailing home bloated with numerous crates of trillium.

His kiosk faced the afternoon sun and the locks, but Khym could hear the braying of the dracols in the canals. These large, green-hided reptiles were used to pull the barges of precious goods to the Censwadd. Gold, silver, and jasmine petals flowed down the canals from the great cities of Kurin, Lusnyr and Sassenach. There was another sound as well. It was the sound of chanting. Khym recognized the language. It was the ancient tongue of Northern barbarians who plundered Shandaloor a thousand years ago. They pillaged and then they stayed, supplanting the local magistrates, generals and even the priests. Or in this case the acolytes of a hundred different temples in the city. These acolytes stopped flagellating themselves only long enough to intrude into Khym's kiosk. The sun was eclipsed by the coarse, brown robes of these holy men.

"Our mistress wishes to have a word with you."

"So many messengers for one word. I grant her entry to these humble environs."

"High Priestess Shamma wishes to speak with you at the Temple of Murluk."

A High Priestess, mused Khym. The words of a high priestess could bring him gold or at the least silver.

Khym rose and strapped a leather baldric across his chest. Khym took his falchion from his cushion and hung it from the baldric, arranging the curved sword about his waist. He followed the acolytes. The temple and the fortress lay at the two ends of the city. The harbor and its bazaar rested between. The rich merchants built their mansions on the sloping hills. The M'rrr built their homes in the lowland, downwind of the canals and the musky stench of dracols and worse.

The acolytes paused when they reached the main boulevard. The satrap's army was on parade. Khym studied the soldiers; lancers, he noted. These men wore great helms and heavy cuirasses. Broad, short bladed gladius swords hung from their armored waists. At the head of the column of marchers, a man rode a roan war-horse. The beast was draped in chain mail. The rider carried his plumed helmet under his left arm. His hair was blond and a neat moustache and goatee ringed his lips.

Khym stared at the warrior. He was the perfect scion of his Northern barbarian forebears. A bastard sword with a gilded hilt hung from his leather belt.

A sedan chair followed the lancers. Temple eunuchs hauled at the long poles of the chair. A black-robed figure sat satiated upon the chair. The warrior wheeled upon his stallion and rode toward the chair. The figure, a woman, rose and extended her hand to the warrior. He took her hand and kissed it gently. She drew back her hand. The warrior then drew forth the long sword and held it up to the crowds about them. Sunlight beamed off the glistening weapon. The figure sat back on the chair and continued down the boulevard. Khym looked to his acolyte guides. They pressed forward, following the procession.

Khym looked about the Temple of Murluk. The waxiform hieroglyphics he beheld informed him this temple was far older than Murluk, the upstart Northern deity. These symbols were ancient ur-text when his own people first began to draw clumsy pictographs. Khym stared transfixed by these strange sigils, and then he knew this was a temple sanctified to the one nameless goddess of the moon whom one may only cry out to but twice—once as one is born and again as one dies.

Khym was led into a small room off the vestibule of the temple. The High Priestess Shamma came into the room. She was the woman he had seen in the courtyard. Khym knew that mere appearance did not convey age, but his eyes still traced her features for some clue. He looked to her vermilion eyes so like a rabbit's orbs, and crow's feet and aquiline nose. Mostly, he noticed the stark white hair, as white as the ice flows of Kadath, and skin as pale as a ripe onion set upon a banquet table. He would not hazard a guess whether she stood as the High Priestess when the Northern barbarians stormed the castled city walls or if she has known less than twenty summers.

An acolyte brought in an earthen pot of burnt-bark tea. Growing up in his father's house, Khym had grown up learning the punctilio tea ceremonies of

this people. Though ages ago, Khym was able to provide a facile facsimile. Shamma leaned back in her chair and took her tea in silence.

Only after her cup was emptied did she speak: "I have a cargo I wish you to carry."

"I prefer not to trade in icons or relics. They wreck havoc with the goodwill spells and blessings on *Dawn Breaker*. I do so hope you understand."

"Not relics, nor icons. A person. I want you to transport a young woman, a temple concubine in this very congregation."

"Am I to be a proselytizer in some great mission to save the sinners? I fear that I may be foremost amongst that population." Khym smiled his widest smile. "I trust there will not be testimony on my poop deck. It might disturb my sailors."

"I wish you to remove her. She is tainted and an abomination to Murluk."

"Tainted. In what way? In her thoughts or theology?"

"She is tainted in her blood and in her heart."

"Pity that it is nothing so sublime as heresy. So Murluk must be a jealous deity to find her so tainted. And this God has spoken onto you about travel arrangements. I have never been so honored before."

"Or so flippant."

"Debatable. One need only ask my father. But I will carry your tainted one, most virulent spawn of evil, but only of her own volition. Khym Te Yung is no slaver to be carrying persons like common chattel."

"She will wish to go, I assure you."

"And who is she?"

"Z'Harizaam."

* * *

Khym met Z'Harizaam in the Old City. It was in the main bazaar not too distant from Khym's own kiosk. The Old City rested next to the poor and crowded Clowders of the M'rrr. Khym knew the feline creatures well. He also knew their slashing weapons, great halberds with wide curving, scythe-like blades. He had stood many times before their tawny and sibilant assaults with only his father's finest archers at his back.

Z'Harizaam had hair black as a starless night and eyes of midnight shade that hovered above her silken veil. She dressed in black robes with a vivid sash much like the garments sold amongst the Elves. The sash curved about her body, giving secret promises to what was underneath and hidden. Khym had not seen such a striking woman in a long time. Decades perhaps. Or centuries. He dismissed this errant thought with a casual wave of his hand.

"I am Khym Te Yung of *Dawn Breaker*. Am I correct to take it that you are Z'Harizaam, concubine in the temple consecrated to Murluk, most mighty God of the North?"

"I am she."

Khym smiled. "It is Shamma, your very own High Priestess, who has sent me to you."

Khym paused, awaiting her reaction.

"And she wishes you to do what once you have found me?"

"Shamma wishes me to take you on as a passenger and take you away from this most holy of cities."

Her dark eyes flashed. "Why?"

"Ask her," answered Khym. "Or ask Murluk. I am told He finds you tainted. By action, thought or nature, I know not."

"It is not about religion. It is about a man."

"I don't care if it is about a woman. I pilot a ship upon the seas. That is all. I care more for pirates than politics, reefs than religion. I have a cabin by the quartermaster's, which is dry and safe."

"I don't know why she bothers." Z'Harizaam began to walk, her robes swishing about her. Khym followed slowly. "Vydassion is a captain in the satrap's personal guard; he could never care for a crone like her."

Khym saw again in his mind the meeting of Shamma with the blond warrior. Vydassion, he thought.

"People do strange things when they are in love."

"What do you know of love?" she asked scornfully.

"I was in love once when the world was young and the mountains had not yet begun to rise. She was a princess in our land and I loved her with all my heart, and all my mind, and all of my soul that I could control. I trekked all across my father's han to bring her the sweetest fruits, the choicest game and the softest silks. I brought them all to her father's fortress in a magnificent attempt to woo her. I rode into the keep, my stallion dressed in ostrich feathers, and a hundred llamas bearing my gifts."

"Did she love you?"

"You cannot make someone love you with gifts, not even the singular gift of sincere kindness. So no, she did not love me in return. She loved only one of the lesser gods who lived on the newly forming crags. One day she left her village never to return. Up, up she climbed up to an eagle's aerie, and from there she cried out to our beautiful, young god. Was it months or merely a day that she did call out so? I cannot say; however she cried out for so long that her cry was all that was left of her. I still hear her voice in the mountains."

"That's an echo."

"That is my princess!" Khym smiled.

"Is that the truth?" Z'Harizaam asked skeptically.

"Oftentimes a good lie is more honest than the truth," Khym replied. "My offer of the cabin stands. Let us meet on the banks of the canal at the crest of the evening."

* * *

Khym returned to his kiosk to await the night's coming. He spoke an inhuman 'word' to the two small gargoyles that guarded the entry. Dismissed, they took wing and flew back to *Dawn Breaker*.

The brewster stood before the kiosk. Her hair was as grey as an old goose, but her eyebrows were as black as on her twenty-first year, when ever that day had been. A woolen shawl hung from her shoulders and her long skirt ended in tattered strips at her bare feet. The woman held more of the pumpkin ale Khym was glad to see.

"You are brave to truck with Shamma and Z'Harizaam both. A brave man to meet both in a day's span." She held out the ale to Khym. "I thought only Vydassion to be so fearless."

He fumbled in his purse for a few coppers. She stopped him. "No need. It is gratis for so valiant a man—or perhaps that is foolish."

Khym took the offered stein. "I am Khym Te Yung of *Dawn Breaker*. And you?"

"I was called Jiada when I wore a younger woman's face."

Khym settled himself onto a cushion. He mused into the light brown drink a moment, then spoke. "And you are acquainted with the doings of

this city. Know you facts or merely rumors?"

Jiada laughed, exposing a blackened toothless gap. "Facts travel on the good baker's cart, but flavorful rumors fly like his bread's aroma. I sate my belly with both. Which morsel are you seeking? The smell or the crust?"

"I would seek knowledge. The knowledge of Vydassion and Shamma. The knowledge of Vydassion and Z'Harizaam." Khym paused, twisting his mustachios about his little finger a moment. "Z'Harizaam fears Shamma's love for Vydassion, it seems. Or vice versa. And I find myself trapped within their triangle."

"Shamma seeks love like a door-mouse; yet she seeks power like a lioness. And jealousy is the serpent at her throat. She fears her influence is slipping down a cataract. A cataract that is a concubine in her own temple. Z'Harizaam's fear is more visceral. It is a young woman's fancy. A thought tied too much to an ambitious man."

"A lodestone has two poles; by which does Vydassion sail?"

"That is a question Shamma and Z'Harizaam must settle. After speaking with you, Z'Harizaam did not return to the temple. And Shamma has not been seen at the mid-day supplications."

"In this city, words such as you have spoken are worthy of the axeman's block or the inquisitor's rack at the least."

"I have told you my news. Have you anything to share with an old woman?" She drew her shawl about her head. "I do love the tales of Chu the Great Pirate. Do you know any I haven't heard?"

"I would know the stories of Admiral Chu you have heard?" asked Khym.

"You strike me as one such as the pirate, and thusly would know of more recent adventures."

"I am but a humble merchant with a falchion about my person. Admiral Chu was a great warrior armed with a long katana in one hand and short seppuku in the other. Chu sailed the Inland Sea a century ago. Surely he is dead or at least a wizened, old man sitting in his moon-gazing tower each night, a green tea or plum wine beside him."

"Mayhap a warrior owes more to cunning than sharpened steel, good merchant," Jiada said. "There are many who claim Chu to be the Emperor's only son."

"Many make claim to the missing heir. Such claims are as seashells washed up by the morning's tide. You can hear many lies if you hold them up to your ear."

"You speak with such decisiveness. Do you know the Eastern Empire's court?"

"I have an ending to a tale you have not heard."

"That I believe," Jiada said.

* * *

The sun hung tired and orange in the sky as it set down for the night's approach and the canal water blackened quickly as the darkness drew its first breath from great lake's mist. The canal gurgled like a drowning man as it emptied into the lake. Dracols cried out pitilessly to the moon, already majestic in the sky. Their voices seemed to spew sounds like a sleeping child to Khym's ears. His skiff sliced though the water effortlessly.

Khym pulled the boat onto the bank of the canal. Moonlight cast a luminous curtain upon the leaves of the surrounding trees. Z'Harizaam stood

on the rocks lining the canal.

"I must say that I am surprised by your presence. From our earlier conversation, I feared I would have a solitary journey back to *Dawn Breaker*."

Z'Harizaam glanced about the wooded landscape. "I have decided to stay in Shandaloor."

"Then you have come all this way to inform me of this! Has your city no messengers, no street urchins who can carry a word?"

"I have come to reveal the truth." Her voice was loud, louder than needed to carry over the dracol's noise.

"Reveal it to whom?" asked Khym.

Z'Harizaam paused, looking expectantly to the woods. There was movement in the bushes. A figure came out of the darkness.

"Vydassion will not be coming." It was Shamma.

"What have you done to him," screamed Z'Harizaam, lunging for Shamma. Khym grabbed her arms, as she tried to claw the other woman's eyes.

"Nothing," replied Shamma. "Or nothing much. Just a simple sleeping potion."

Z'Harizaam broke free of Khym's grasp. "Vydassion will know the truth." Turning back to Khym, she commanded: "You will tell him. You will tell him Shamma's plans, what she hired you to do."

"Your assignment will no longer be required," she told Khym and to Z'Harizaam she said, "I tried to be merciful and give you a chance for exile, but by your efforts to poison the captain against me, I am taking actions myself."

Shamma raised her arms. Upon her flesh were painted gyres and hieroglyphs: secret sigils. Z'Harizaam stepped back. Shamma chanted in a low voice. Z'Harizaam began speaking the protective spells of Murluk's order.

Khym drew his crescent blade. "Whatever you plan, stop it now," he ordered and stepped forward to enforce his command. He felt the air change about him as he moved. He felt the eldritch forces rise, like the wind before a thunderstorm. He stopped, held beyond the bubble of magick as a fish is trapped in the Censwadd, unable to walk the streets of Shandaloor. Bound so, Khym could only watch the enfolding tableau of the two women.

Zephyr breezes jostled Z'Harizaam's hair and rays of the rhadamanthine moon suddenly shone like spears on the ground about her. Z'Harizaam slowly began to move in her own St. Vitas dance, swinging in rhythm with the waxing moon. Undulating, spiraling and wild, she danced. Khym could smell the heat from her body. Her arms flailed about. Her black hair whirled in the still air. Beads of salty sweat swept across her flesh. Shamma stepped closer, chanting louder, louder, nearly shouting her imprecations above the silence.

As Z'Harizaam danced faster and faster, Shamma looked more drained. Her face became flush and her movements were labored and slow. Suddenly it was over: Shamma fainted and Z'Harizaam fell to the ground, standing upon her four paws — a large black tiger transformed. The beast sniffed at the fallen form of her foe. Shamma lay still, her breathing shallow and pained. And then that also ceased.

The cat looked up to the luminous moon and roared on the banks of the Censwadd, in sight of the lofty spires of Shandaloor. Z'Harizaam turned and trod toward the Clowders of the M'rrr.

Raymond Soulard, Jr.



6 x 36 Nocturnes

~sixth series~

*"The way things work
is that eventually
something catches."*

—Jorie Graham, 1996

[continued]

xxv. Balance (for Lisa Marie)

"No way out but through"
—Robert Frost

In a timber of shadows one hand
slides by another. Silence. Waiting.
A thrum of murmurs, & something damp
floats upward toward moonlight.
Dreams graze from the same pool.
Shuffle. Hurry. Still. This myth is mean
with will & fight. It can bite harder.
Shhh. Wordless. Touch accumulates on
the branches above, the dew of fierce
moments to come. Shhh. The night is an
elixir of endless conjurations. Shhh.
We hunt secretly, wield two songs about
to mold together. Hours without names
shuffle sticky feet through our words
bound for home. Love a form of anger
with life's emptiness. Something loves us
to love each other. I dream of words
like mocking & abandonment until the phone
rings. You didn't jump the bridge. I keep giving
you my pen. We keep nearing what we are.
Among the stars you wiggle & laugh.
Bite. Now harder. Blood makes best song.
You laugh & strum. Green melodies. Strong flesh.
Art a freakish crash inside empty warehouses
while creatures elsewhere sleep twined,
beyond knowing. Perhaps a day hence nocturnes
dust, dead water, least feelings of flow.

Entropy's crime. No scriptures. No sages.
 Nothing whistling through the flute. No seams.
 Yet our new day beckons like a fist.
 Give it seeds, ideas, & skin. What is passing
 tonight the bonds of someone else's wish.
 Something says: don't look back. What we shall
 become explodes cleanly from the shadows,
 collects its legs in morning rain, gallops wildly
 toward the home it sniffs but cannot yet see.

xxvi. Healing (for Lisa Marie)

You hold the bag of fire made of starlight
 & demons, carry it with you through the blind
 countries of your despair, believe it an icon
 or an angel, dare not ponder the blood it
 sucks from you, how it taints your music,
 a little now, a little more, how its face
 snarls at your uneven footsteps, your notice
 of tender sky or pale butterfly, how it mocks
 & mutes your future with a plan you will not to see.
 Once, twice, you drop the bag of fire & run.
 You run toward sunlight, clean water, clothes
 fit for your deepening, dancing bones. You run.
 Open doors hint sanctuary. Open hands promise
 healing. You run. Til across your path the bag
 of fire, made of starlight & demons. It picks
 you up with your very hands, & returns you back
 with your very feet. But the pale butterfly remains
 near, even now, the open hands & doors still & always beckon.

xxvii. Dislocation (for Lisa Marie)

Tonight, as ever, chasing angels.
 Tonight, as ever, chasing you. . .
 A dream so fierce it's made a world.
 This world nearly spectral enough to resemble you.
 Stars summoned for your healing, music for your heart.
 Universe of trees, hear my cry! Grant her release.
 Days spill & empty, sometimes only silence for songs.
 A spectre in the night drapes along me: you?
 Hunger & thirst & desire i beg maintain me.
 A pilgrim walks & sings & shapes the road with his wishes. . .
 My angel sleeps tonight wrapped in magick I conjure.
 My angel sleeps safe in my will to adore.

xxviii. Anniversary (for Lisa Marie)

"Tell me of beauty beneath her skin . . ."

Tell me of stellar beneath her pain
 of a first light never silenced
 of a trust always being gained.
 Tell me of a power in hazel eyes
 & slow fingers
 Tell me of a muse I've long dreamed
 Tell me of a goddess I've forever known
 Tell me of language fine as starlight
 Tell me of music gone & come again
 Tell me of the broken bones of silence
 Tell me of her epics, let me conjure them
 Tell me of sacrifice, one for another
 Tell me of freedom, a green embrace in the moon
 Tell me of love, one for another
 Tell me a new path, rock-strewn with wishes
 Tell me cold daylight, crumpled blanket, a scrap
 Tell me morning song, its feelers, its whimsy
 Tell me how to take her hand without twisting
 Tell me how she will lead, or simply to trust
 Tell me she is the power, the thing I've ever followed
 Tell me how to sing greater when the night
 mounts a fury
 Tell me how to preserve her above glory & wrong
 Tell me how to worship, & worship, & receive
 worship in return
 Tell me the nocturnes are nothing yet
 bid me keep writing
 Tell me her laugh crumbles my pages yet
 point toward my next lines
 Tell me I am her muse, a like creature
 in her longings
 Tell me what songs, which elixirs, how to defend
 without owning.
 Tell me something brushes by, someone
 calls my secret name
 Tell me pens are bare branches while she
 leafs out forever
 Tell me fire, tell me ocean, tell me
 how she preserves me
 Tell me what good a song when
 the universe splits forth
 Tell me my hands yet mean something
 toward a good undefined
 Tell me the future bears her face &
 tis mine to describe it
 Tell me cages are for bones not for
 creatures of gold
 Teach me how to adore her, & everything,
 & nothing
 Teach me less & less, until I lay prone

Tell me of beauty beneath her skin
 Tell me of beauty beneath her skin
 Flay me, swallow me, own me whole
 Tell me of beauty beneath her skin.

xxix. The Weight (for Lisa Marie)

Love beneath love sucks the bones
 dry of despair—
 Dream within dream preaches strange fires
 found atwist in new fingers—
 Frenzy upon frenzy point toward our
 distant island's jutting hulk—
 How these songs still trail your crimson
 strands, hail yet your secret caverns—
 How what approaches a fist, a fleet,
 a creeping & a howl, magick to
 shatter swarming cages, human beasts—
 How yet pages shake & sum, fingers pray
 to branch & starlight—
 These weighted days will sink to fragments.
 These fat hours will wither to blue music.
 Love beneath love stokes new fancies.
 Dream within dream murmur of damp merry games.
 Frenzy upon frenzy live the happy mad artists.
 We curl toward each other, a great desire still unnamed.

xxx. Terrestrial Music (for Lisa Marie)

"Let the beauty we love be what we do.
 There are hundreds of ways to kneel & kiss the ground."
 —Jalaluddin Rumi

i. Manifestation

Blue fancies stray through dawn's silken
 quiet, love atwist with grief, a lowing
 breeze, crumbling sighs. Fist, then fingers,
 seek among dreams, now hold a fragment,
 now possess a message. Follow today's sun into
 the sky, clad with pen & faith. Resume. Go!

ii. Softly

Cry out, softly, til something, somewhere,
 responds. Sweat every love with open hands,
 raw want. Beg, chortle, no way out but through,
 a path of nails, skies ever fierce, dreams
 like trenches. Sleep on open ground under minty-
 bright stars. Cry out. Loudly. Open hands.
 Chimes, butterflies, rusting lillies—something
 somewhere will respond. Life's countless
 brawls, quick & slow, & what tempered light
 may emerge from life's beatings. Become
 a vessel patched with music & empathy. Thine
 heart greater without, deeper within, abler for every mending.

iii. Wilderland

The water's rustling speaks your name.
 Speaks mine own. Speaks what persists
 between us. No binding ring. No fat quiver of miles.
 Persistence. A fat drunken man watches the sun
 set over the water. Hums & believes. Persistence.
 Unpretty magick bent on enduring the harder years.
 I love you. Thus truth poisons my heart & I speak.
 What remains, a deeper glitter. What persists,
 a fistly shine. Tapestries of silence wove for
 walls receiving no beam. Hazel eyes near me
 & I flinch. You are not real. This but a dream.
 Another claims you. Cloudy laughter.
 Just the waves tell most what to do.
 Their merest song, a dominion's bedrock.
 Their human trade, their finnish play.
 Few afloat still remember: how deep they sail within.
 Another claims you. You wish him well.
 The water's rustling dims, a newly checked tongue.
 What passes for knowing resumes its chuckling hurry.
 Warriors plan, deny dreaming of elves.
 Persistence. Whichever the river, whichever
 the bed. Persistence. That last dream in the night,
 teeth hardly loosed by the morning.

iv. Unassailable

A star, a fist, an unloved corner of history.
 Our branches shine tonight but some exceeds
 them still. Where our humility? Where our pity?
 We live on tonight to love like a better wisdom.
 We live on beneath our roots, beyond our leaves.
 We live on to kneel, to dance. To kneel. To dance.
 No fist between us, no knot, skin rathered to cloak.
 Sunshine enough to blind & reveal. Text. Roaring.
 Nothing less than everything to come beckons.
 A star, a fist, a tremble where the songs cling together.
 With trees to learn to sing again. Hands near
 me quietly too. Soon easier to kneel, easier to dance.
 We live on tonight pocked with secret knowing.
 We live on tonight suddenly high on leaf & starshine.
 We live on tonight perhaps some study our writhing's example.
 Nothing divides, the night breathes us back & forth.
 Even sunshine slows us as many count toward one.
 Nothing bright with colors. Nothing blue with music.
 Nothing brings a center, floating, ever nearer where truths abound.

v. Undulation

The world rough & round, a quaking of movement
 & pain. A rocking cage through which music
 shoots, flares, aches, frees what it can,
 comforts the rest.
 I think of wife & daughter, loosed from time,
 walking with them in a talking forest,
 one bids me chase, the other bids me run.
 Returned here, wherever, warm still, I resume to
 poking in darkness for some staying essence,
 an oak leaf perhaps, your moan, your laugh,
 a within beast bowed, a fist uncurled. Sugar. Haven.
 The world rough & round, countless paths of
 sea & dirt. Legs hurry. Fins splash. Feathers
 cut. Here, wherever, there, where you glow
 womanly fine, something upholds all.
 Truths sweep past, mistaken often for something useless.

vi. Her Aura

Half moon. Terrestrial music leaves no
heart unchanged. Wind traces out the notes,
blood gives them trajectory. Half moon.
Tonight my dreams will be a heap of
gleaming pebbles. A rumble of blinking chants.
A bouquet for muse & her pilgrim. Under half moon.

vii. Ceaseless

Whole moon. The light covers you in
my dream's eye & I think: Worship?
Possession? No. Something more willow.
Deeper unending. You dance nude with
the light while I sleep. Whole moon.
Tides of love. Hazel eyes swish my cheek.

viii. Mint Rhapsody

The world exists beyond contusion. Beyond lesson.
Beyond what's missing. Beyond what's music.
The world exists in spaces untouched & those
abused. An unseen glance at evening's wane.
Words scattered across a golden field. Honey & fruit.
The world exists beneath soil & stars. Leaves
tossing toward freedom, the light devolving in
spatters. Memories dapple the grass. Hungers
arise without names.
The world exists & I love you. Another confession.
Burn it. Make another. Again chasing angels
we again near collision. Dreams braid our nearing
world. A forest of magicks, tall skies of fecund
spells. Songs for a bed unlaid & its laughter.
The world exists in its most denying shadows &
troughs. In moments looking past your obvious
smile. When you confuse me with a history's
foulness & fist. When the soul we share forgets
its power, its will to joy & abandon. The world exists
& I love you. See how we near. Feel what we are.

ix. Desert Wish

An urge to stray beyond mourning, burn what remains, gestate anew. Bubble & scatter among tunnels deeper within. Everything passes, touch twice & gone. An urge to hollow out the sky, drink her waning elixir. Flatten cities & try something else. Kiss absent lips with desire's fingertips.

x. Incandescent

A pen sought a butterfly with words of shivering air. Sought with words candy & true, sought to build her a song of woods & waves, promises to sink soil & hold, know her secrets without saying, without taking them away. The pen kept on writing: how to live in this world? Nights answered: harm noone. Nights answered: serve her. Nights answered: be the flaming thing you are. Be high. Be higher. Dance til nothing's left. Love rightly. Love noisily. Make an art of your kiss. Brightly, brightly, wrote the pen, no plans, just a wish. The butterfly neared, & still nearer. The butterfly filled a field, & now fills the world. How to live in this world? Build it well. Give it love.

xi. Nothing

Dance til nothing's left. Maraud the night. See her rise in your sky. Accept this praise. A path burns before you. Walk it with cold steady steps. Dance til a flicker settles atop your head, maybe it sings, maybe it keeps you awhile. Her storm gathers you wearing a gown of dust. Dance til your icons & pathway rise together, the sparkles & substance maybe suggest a world. See her rise in your sky. Wish to praise & know her. Climb her pattern. Try her songs. Dance til everything matters. Then release. Again. Nothing's left: try her songs. Nothing's left: see her rise.

xii. Homeless

Now just a wish for a bed of simple
 dreams after a deep bowl of heat.
 Now just hands wanting to do more than
 cower & defend.
 Now just a creature too long among stones
 & lies.
 Beloved, turn my way with your rags &
 prayers.
 Beloved, see this magick I bear in
 clean water & soft words.
 Beloved, submit finally to the freedom
 which watches about you.
 Crawl if you cannot walk. If you cannot
 move: just ask, I will bear you.

xiii. Sinking

Little has moved since our last
 rambunctious hour. No new counsel
 from leaf or dream.
 Steps offer no third way. Pursue or
 desist. Things light & laughing in
 this world still press, elude.
 Our next hour nears, behold its
 powerful tread. We know each other
 better than the world. Right now
 this wears like a curse. Pursue, or desist?

xiv. Rising

I met a city man who'd fallen & bled. Now he
 was laughing. Muddy night sky. I'd been
 biking & praising Art. His temple bled.
 It dripped. He smiled & tried to explain.
 He smiled deeper & stopped trying. I thought
 of you after & sang aloud, biking,
 through my open heart.
 I met a man with an inquiring jingle.
 I'd been hoping not to crash. He took
 my coins & nearly looked at me. I said at least
 neither of us is bleeding. He nodded &
 said amen.
 The police surround everything. The king
 touches his chest. The preacher diverts
 with a smile. I biked til I met a wall
 of words. Now walking, now crawling. Now
 words, now better. A cafe crowd drinks
 coffee & sings happy birthday.
 You rise again within me. Choiceless, happy, I pursue.

xv. Conjuraton

I begin to sing a different song, to entice
 & woo you from the within we share. Half-
 light & lingual magick. Conjuraton. Release.
 Sliding along the hum of the hidden universe.
 Lap at your hair with a wind from my afar.
 Conjuraton. Romance of a roused & muscular
 love. Dream of the moon: slowly. I receive
 you with warm red oils & teasing insistent chords.
 This is what we do, are, can be. Squeal. Scream.
 Approach yourself again, beginning on the day we
 crossed, the moment our love blew up. Kiss the moon.
 Receive me anew. Conjuraton. Closer to sane.

xvi. Residua

Approach yourself again, beginning on the day
 we missed, the moment your love grew off.
 There. That moment like a rat or a roach,
 first of a countless. Now. Speak a spell, loudly,
 & see that moment throttle green & go. Speak
 again, a few stumbling words of love laced in
 freedom. Look. The sun is shining. You made it.

xvii. Damage

Now awake. A dream still looped in your
 curls, keep it, shhh! keep it. A glint in
 hazel eyes your locket, mull it, sing to it,
 touch its fur. Its feathers. Its skin. Sing
 to it, slip it when fearful between your breasts,
 pour candle wax over it. A burn. A memory.
 "Nothing really. Nothing." The wind knows better.
 Each noticing tree as well. Shhh! Comfort
 this tiny world of its woes. With casual fingers
 & giggling hums, comfort it til night's crown
 sits upon you again.
 Later awake. Later entice this dream further into morning.

xviii. Weightless

To refrain & await you. To walk steadily
 in the meanwhile. To sniff & nudge a world
 yet to be. To guard, to dance by its laws.
 New songs inside an egg's dreaming. What dreams
 ponder, & summon when hopeful.

xix. Nothing Less

Singing costs it all. Beasts feed at my
 despair, their offer of help.
 My mate tangles in a dream neither
 day's nor night's—
 My mate wonders at how tightly I still
 hold her within & beyond—
 My mate wonders. Sleeps in murmuring
 darkness—
 She feels like the universe's first child,
 blinking in a bright field of spells.
 Something between beasts & the greatest moon,
 perhaps told more bluntly by the trees'
 blaring wind. I don't know. I sing.
 I say I love you. It costs everything.
 The beasts feed. I don't know. I sing.
 I dream my mate is stirring. She drifts,
 & breathes my touch.

xx. Haven

She rides along the train & smiles.
 Dig a blue mountain passing by. Scoop
 the puffy sun, really do. Trees dark &
 thoughts flaxen. This is what it's like
 when a song opens up again, returns.
 Within bubbly with hope. Love me. You still do.

xxi. Full Moon Over Willow

Our dream is a recurring insistence,
 leaves & petals, dawn & lightning.
 Our dream swoops with song & moon.
 Our dream is high above, deep below.
 Our dream resembles a fist, tall
 grass, a blank hungry canvas.
 Our dream is a thrashing press
 against our many hands, our
 shared heart, a mean throbbing,
 a soft ticking, denial & futility
 a dingy fuel, call it love, sketch
 it like a red balloon, on & on it strides.
 Our dream is patient as a nocturnal
 prowler for living meat & giving loins.
 You rule me with a chime of laughter,
 several furious words, a lingering further
 in than blood. I rule you with hard songs
 speckling pages. Our dream concedes nothing.
 High above, deep below, butterflies
 without, claws within. A red balloon,
 a noisy bothersome thing. Patience.
 Our dream pricks the moonlight,
 licks its shine, probes its worth.
 Our dream sleeps between us, keeps
 us flicking & wiggling, builds a world
 from the starlight, sings of ecstasies nearing.

xxii. Fidelity

I think some call it bright faith.
 A hunger becomes a path, a hurrying
 measured in songs. Fidelity. What
 clings, what sinks in, what is discovered
 there already. A leap no longer dream,
 no longer moan. Fidelity. A leap. She knows
 my bright faith & upholds me.

xxiii. Bright Faith

Fidelity more a taste than a feeling.
 Something low, between the veins, a breath,
 several, where is it? Where did it go?
 Yonder. You'll see it. Past kiosks & signage,
 vendors for & against. Yonder. You'll
 see it. Wait. Let the crowds pass.
 Wait. Leaves stir. Always with you.
 Ride on.

xxiv. Juniper

Sometimes another nears. Laughter
 resembling us. Aloft awhile. Another
 moment, & gone. We persist, nothing
 more.
 The phone rings, you listen. Rings,
 I wait. Rings, we long. The worlds breathes
 & burns slowly.
 I was with your juniper. It tells me
 what you think, who you are. Counsels
 me simply: persist.
 Your voice bright in my mind, knowing
 mine bobbles too in yours, jitters.
 Others speak of us like a beast they fear.
 A pressure they witness & desire.
 We persist, nothing more. Nobody else.
 The phone cringes between rings.

xxv. Unto

Build a life toward the castle of trees we dreamed,
 morning sunlight knocks & whispers, rings of kisses
 moving quickly & slowly. In waking I'll moan toward
 you. Seized, you'll smile & preen. Beauty shines for
 its master ever newly. Rawly. Build this life from
 surf & mushrooms. Distance & drive.
 Scars powerful still but abstracting like myths,
 corrode lessly. Pen at rest, cathedral of embrace,
 I'll study your heart. Learn its liquid noise.
 Castle of trees to come, dapples childly days,
 names of things yet unpossessed, heave &
 flow of dawns spent twined.

In waking I'll writhe & bite, kick & grasp.
 Bitten, you'll laugh too. Desire triggers its
 own laws. Faith loosens the fetters. Defended,
 you'll finally believe. Castle of trees,
 the way through clear at last. Til then, something
 persists, call it love. Love will blow up with joy.

xxvi. Underworld

Light flares across the dead sky,
 rocket fast, honey slow, then gone again.
 Music grumbles up, now strange, now sweet,
 now promising, but again an inner claw
 calls for silence.
 Better to thrash with hope—blood-blind & cringing—
 dash for the next rock—, or mock the sacred
 within & without—nights open-eyed & counting—
 body numb as a drowned land's crown?
 I dream of you. You are surrounded by
 the spikes you have wrought. I am through
 calling, no more calling. Turned toward you, then
 away, I listen.

xxvii. Scorch

Let the crowds pass. What remains? A lock
 of hair, an old letter. A giggling photograph,
 a scrawl about fidelity. Close the curtains.
 Sleeping cat on the bed. The radio's silence.
 The phone rings. Ask: what remains? Days
 pending conjure in the privatest shadows.

xxviii. Dispossession

Always with you. Days accelerate, I fall
 with them, neon passages through autumn
 leaf corridors. Kings wager coolly the greed
 & fear they see around them. Stars rain
 forever on a cosmos sung from nothing.
 Afar from me, perhaps you laugh. My cup
 trembles. What awaits? Always with you.
 Friction sparks the gap: a bridge? a wall?
 Do you still sway with me toward magick
 conjured from chimes & butterflies?

I keep asking the passing nights:
 Another world is possible, but who have
 you become? I keep pitching into the
 music. I keep transmuting my despair
 & love to song. Keep radiating from
 my night's long twisting heat. Seeking in
 coming days what rewards the mystery bears.
 Always with you. Faith growing into something.

xxix. Ministration

Persistence. Flames in airless vaults,
 a press forward & a nevertheless, the very
 darkling skin above us lit with possibilities,
 persistence. Suddenly you listen. Worlds
 fall away, you listen. Persistence, breathing
 quickly, you listen. What matters anything
 when a wished hand remains afar?
 Listen, try a new way.
 Another moment passes. Hunger, uncertainty.
 Persistence wears a bright skirt, calls with
 a quick smile for a touch. Something like
 petals, feathers. O, persistence. A cement
 bench, near a landscape freckled by mansions,
 traffic warped & went. Someone with a child
 hurries by, singing. My face in the moonlight
 cascades your vision. We continue fruiting.

xxx. Radiance

Terrestrial music leaves no heart
 unchanged. Chimes blow across the night
 touching singers, oaks & slaves. Persistence
 sometimes bursts for the light within
 to crackle brighter. I leave a candle at
 your door, feather in its wax. A few words
 murmured in your dreams. Wonder over them til
 later I explain.



To be continued in *Cenacle* / 53 / October 2004

Turn on . . . Tune in . . .



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Raymond Soulard, Jr.



Secret Joy Amongst These Times: The History of Scriptor Press, 1995 to the Present

"Think for yourself
& question authority"

—Dr. Timothy Leary

Chapter Seven

continued from

The Cenacle / 50 / December 2003

Perhaps I've died many deaths in this lifetime; I've heard reincarnation on occasion defined this way. Perhaps the psychedelic sacrament effects this cataclysm when necessary. Perhaps the energies within & without collaborate to bring about the smashing end & raw renewal a soul upon its own cannot cause. Perhaps there is no perhaps in any of this.

I rode high & crazed psychedelic torrents into the new century, atwist in my small tent among the many thousands comprising the Big Cypress music festival the rockband Phish had thrown, 100,000 of us gathered to groove into the new millennium.

Money in my hand signified nothing; the words in my notebook meant nothing; I didn't know where I was & barely who I was. What if I went insane? What if this acid trip, some 20 hits, likely much more, was the one that "permafried" me?

I heard a war going on outside my tent's shell, screams & explosions; slow it took for me to realize they were fireworks & joyous whoops. I'd been cowering for hours alone, gone to no-places, past cruel images of my youth's sufferings flung through my mind's vision to mock & hurt me again. Feelings of embarrassment, anger, sadness. Broken brothers, poor meals & scarce, endless traps rolling me ever back to sloughs of hopeless . . .

Tick tock . . . Tick tock . . . Tick tock . . . eventually the cheers told me something good was happening, really, out there, yes, the music. What had Drumbumm, my traveling companion said, those years of hours ago? "Follow the music. It will always bring you home." Could it?

OK. I staggered out into the night, toward the concert field. Phish! Yes! Oh gosh! Phish! The chuckling rhythms, the spritely melodies, follow, follow it, I'm coming, coming home, here I am, me & my insistent notebook. All night to dance & talk to this needful soul & that laughing one. The songs, endless stream

of them, yes, the music, I am here, I am home.

Toward morning still awake, still laughing, finding my traveling companions where they promised they'd be, & we see in the century's first day as Phish leaves the stage to the Beatles crooning "Here Comes the Sun," this moment, many years ago. I write on & on, the final poem of a sequence, *Two Vessels*, I'd begun many months before, on the long road West to Burning Man 1999:

*the magic spell begins every morning every
day living breathing any kind of gesture
to the good, here comes someone, ask
him the way home, ask his friend, smile,
how's the day & what may evolve, "just
chillin', bro, going to a party tonight &
just chillin'. Wanna come? What's your name?*

Sigh. So began 2000.

We later packed the black van, my little tribe, & rolled out of the Everglades north, smiling, onward, using a clean restroom, first time in days, & on into the Ocala forest of northern Florida. Within those woods I decided much.

A long day tripping among the Rainbow Family, a transcontinentally scattered band of off-the-grid folks living with nature, far from technocratic empiric AmeriKKKa. Oh the temptation, to stay with them, disappear from the need to find a job, pay rent, roam usually lootless the ever-less-loved streets of Boston.

Could I? I could. Would I? No. I had things to do back there in the money-rusting world, Art to make, resistance to aid, healing to pursue, it was not yet my time to step off the grid. One day, yeh, but not yet.

So the trek north continued, I bid goodbye my friends in Columbia, South Carolina, to spend a dear day of books & new ideas with my collaborator Barbara Brannon. Then the Greyhound hauled me on the rest of the way back to Boston.

Done with school, so many years at it but really done, I sought work & lucked into a long-term temp job at Harvard Business School Publishing. "Quality Control," a sort of proofreading job, good money, no security, a cubicle in an ugly big box of a building but freedom to do my thing as long as my work finished timely daily. I dug deep into the Internet for community, music, freak weirdness.

Other work too: editing Thomas Wolfe's *O Lost* (original version of *Look Homeward, Angel*) for Brannon's University of South Carolina Press.



Most importantly, Scriptor Press. Many projects. My ElectroLounge website I worked at steadily, refining & improving every few days. More content by Scriptor Press authors, more meaningful links to sites variously progressive & psychedelic.

The FCC shut down Radio Free Cambridge in January but up rose Allston-Brighton Free Radio in February, & so my "Within's Within" program moved along. Playing the music, reading the work to promote the culture I call my own. Huxley, Leary, McKenna. Beatles, Phish, Pink Floyd. LSD, mescaline, psilocybin. Little of an audience but ABRF's leader, Steve Provizer, schemed constant.

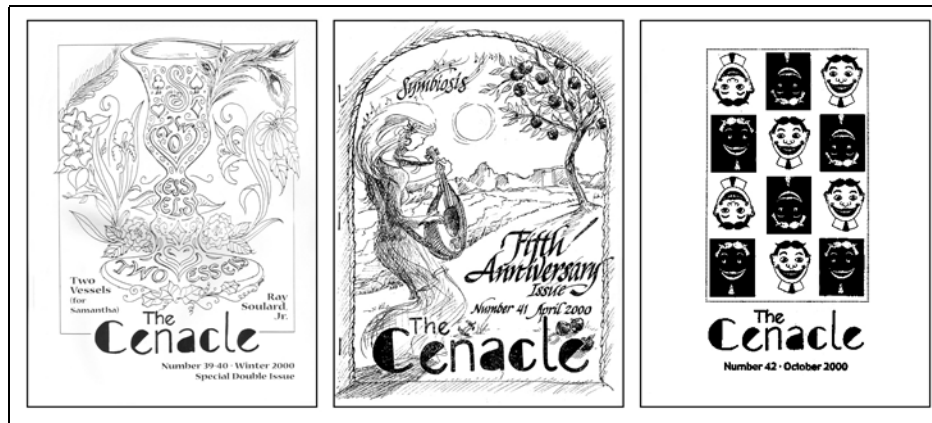
After many months absence, a new issue of *The Cenacle*, #39-40, Winter 2000. *Two Vessels (for Samantha)* is dedicated to a girl known too briefly online & following through the

conceit of two vessels, I & thou, person to person, person to people, person to nature, person to cosmos, endless combinations, two vessels pouring simultaneously into each other. The choices we make, the actions we take, the world we speak, the world as we confront it as it confronts us. I pour into you. You pour into me. Ever & always.

Cenacle 39-40's *Two Vessels* is like *Cenacle* 4-5's *Stranger America* some five years earlier: a poetic travelogue of geography, event, & soul. The difference lay in design, the latter issue bumped up lovely by Brannon—her note refers to it as the “first all-digital *Cenacle*”—& in poetic maturity or, more sharply, ambition. *Two Vessels* is a summoning, language as music as magick, muse as prayer:

*Your name is Eurydice, your mother & I
have never yet danced together, drunk
together, fought for & against our
transforming love. I will promise
her the best of me. She will accept the burden
too. Your birth-day will become our
anniversary. Our anniversary will
become your torch in the world's woods.*

Brannon employs many photographic portraits to decorate the issue: my ruddy-lovely friend Mio, us both virgins unto Burning Man; bowling allies; boulders; long western vistas. The front cover Brannon's visual rendering of the impossible-yet-alluring title. The back cover poet Amante grasping a tamarack fraternally in the Bell Rock Cemetery. What binds all is the slip & climb from beauty to beauty by girl, by leaf, by magick molecule, by pen's hurried leap on & at & over—



“Two Vessels” & sometimes called symbiosis as shown on the cover of *Cenacle* 41 April 2000, a chase with souls’ twined among desire, nature, music, & mystery. This fifth anniversary issue, thirty-first in all, was further along the path, deeper into cyberspatial spheres.

From several years’ backward glance, this issue bears a rending poignancy in how it marks a time come & gone. *Cenacle*: group of artists. My friends. Gerry Dillon’s “And Fechtner, she played her fiddle barefoot” with its sci-fi trappings shot through with working-class sensibilities: “The first time I saw her, I was

gathering shit." Him now sick & low. Mark Shorette's third part of the likely-never-to-be-finished "Wherefore," a fiction of brutal mystical intent:

*arched vision
stretched skies
sing of two
the eyes which merge
separate vision*

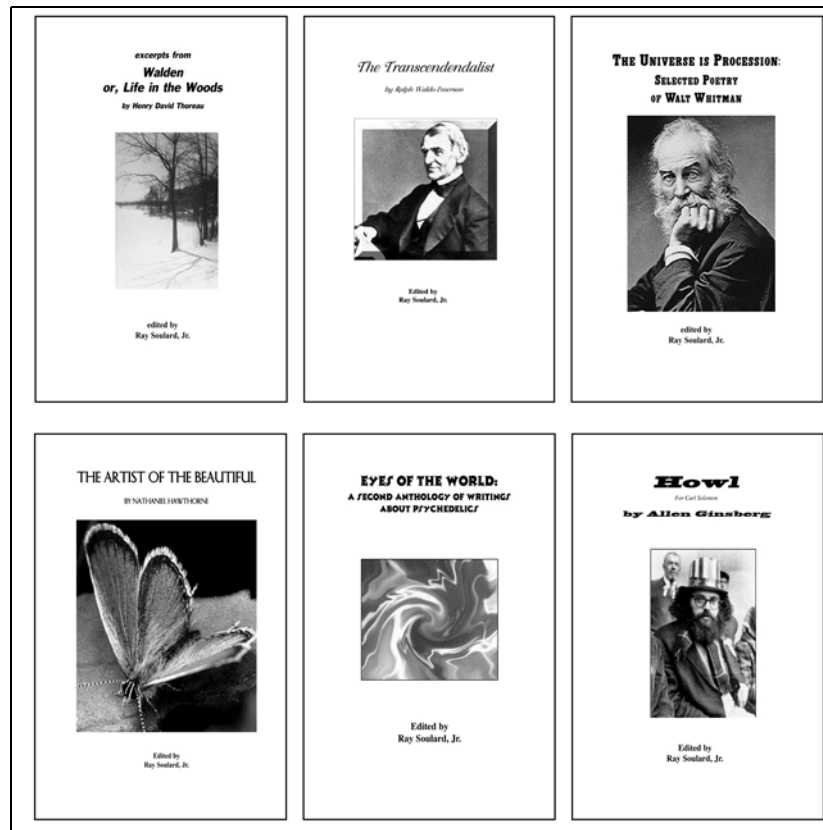
Him now trapped wild within a cage. Joe Ciccone's rhythmic verbosity, his poetic oddness: "Keep trying to love life and someday you will." Him gone to unknown places later, Europe, Rocky Mountains, marriage to a decent-seeming woman. I don't know. Jim Burke III's epistle pre-9/11 forecasting that only some "really bizarre circumstance [will] change the course of humanity's direction."

Brannon's lovely cover & her life eclipsed, o happily, by her own art these days.

They were my friends, still are in some other way. Boston my turf, now a memory. I miss myself somewhat the most: the long nutty "Notes from New England" comprising emails to the girl after Samantha I met online & chased a time. Rebekah. Wolfpup. The *Cement Park* story "Boxes" which elliptically tales my last foul days working at Quantum Books & concludes: "The world is thicker with love than ashes." Do I agree with him? Less so but yes still.

I even realized a dear dream by publishing some of my "Bags End Tales" in this issue; they'd first appeared in a more zine-ish mag in '92 called *Sixes and Sevens* co-created with Gerry Dillon & Jim Gregory. Fantasy stories from my youth, told to & for my sister Christine, her dolls & animals in a quirky neo-Victorian fantasyland.

Yes, Wolfe. O lost.



The summer I spent working at HBSP, going off to Phish shows near & far, & readying for my return to Burning Man. This time I travelled to it by plane & the TOTEM camp remained an unbuilt shambles due to uncooperative soil & poor planning. I determined to bring a gift bookstore again & toward this end created a half-dozen new Burning Man chapbooks: *Excerpts from Walden* by Henry David Thoreau; *The Transcendentalist* by Ralph Waldo Emerson; *The Universe is Procession: Selected Poetry* by Walt Whitman; *The Artist of the Beautiful* by Nathaniel Hawthorne; *Eyes of the World: A Second Anthology of Writing about Psychedelics*; and *Howl* by Allen Ginsberg. Additionally, Brannon & I collaborated on designing & editing an excellent anthology of Joe Ciccone's poetry, *North of Jersey*, with its title's faint allusion to Robert Frost. Burning Man 2000 was one of personal strife for me & a frequent sense of isolation & loneliness. One night, very high on acid, I again writhed in my tent, leaving it via a kind of out-of-body experience, rising, rising, looking down at the great & tiny thing that was Black Rock City, & told somehow I did not have to go back. Another chance to opt out of this plane, it being one of infinite number. Again, I remained, for the time being, though I wondered what would have been discovered in my tent had I chosen to depart. Heh.

The autumn deepened my dislike of my job, isolation, entrapment. Seeking online & found girls to romance, one then another. Leni, blonde, broken, in Florida. Erika, darker, broken, in Montreal. It was life as I'd come to know it, & some of it poured into the year's third *Cenacle*, 42, October 2000.

Cenacle 42 was six months in the arriving. It is dedicated to "Leni Russell, with my love," said woman being one I met online in October & immediately began writing poetry for:

*Begin, again, again, & rightly call any beginning
a miracle. Touch me with beauty,
I'll tap you with balance, together we'll
harness pain to hurl our flight from
dream & awake to meaning & truth,
maybe a love the wisest trees praise,
perhaps a clarity which does not break.*

My friends, acquaintances, even sex partners more often than ever were discovered on the Internet, still in the autumn of 2000 a new tool for human social connections. Timothy Leary once called it "the acid of the 1990s" & moreso this psychedelically-tinged way of soul-crossing changes & is changed by age-old human needs & perpetual human chase after the next & the novel. Both require themselves in an individual's life; it's taken me years since to somewhat work out a balance. Leni came & went in a scant few months, as did the next girl met in cyberspace. Thereafter, this path walked would more profoundly reconfigure my life.

The rest of the issue with one exception featured previously published writers, though several of the pieces were notable. Among these were Joe Ciccone's "Prologue," Mark Shorette's "Listen," & my 36 *Nocturnes [first series]*.

Ciccone's "Prologue" is a 14-page poetic epic & the highlight of his *North of Jersey* published by Scriptor Press at the same time as *Cenacle* 42. He roots & roams its pages seeking redemption both alluring & lasting, & concludes:

*And love, love is whatever we don't have. It's a cold beer
when all the bars are shut after a day of hard traveling,
it's thunder when only silence follows the lightning,
it's a lone parishioner when inspiring sermons are
mumbled in the silence of the rectory, it's a letter to a mother
from her son when an officer in mourning stands at her door.*

And it's your hand as I walk alone through the sadness of this holy street.
 I hope my old friend has found in his later days earthly comforts & loving
 warmth he longed for back then.

Another long poem in this issue is Mark Shorette's "Listen," a multiple-part
 poem as much for vocal utterance as for the printed page, a *cri de cœur* (sp???)
 part Beat, part Rumi:

*never
 you'll never write like
 a mad motherfucker
 never
 not till you cast your pen
 in the creek
 jump in naked
 fish it out as if it were a drowning infant*

*love your pen
 cradle it to your breast
 allow it to suckle from your days of bitterness
 and majesty*

I don't know what he might have written had he not been partly felled by a
 stroke. This poem suggests a looser style, a wilder improv music, mysticism
 with deep fistly thrust.

Also premiering in Cenacle42 was the first series of the poetic sequence 6
 x 36 Nocturnes; writing now in the middle months of 2004, I can report the
 sixth & final series nears its completion. It is easily my most ambitious work in
 length, scope, & time to compose.

The concept derives in part from the musical mixing of electronica composers;
 bits & pieces of tuneful flotsam appear & reappear through the sequence of
 poems, perpetual variety perpetuates:

*something from somewhere. wreckage of a dream
 not yet word, nor yet shine, no longer blue fancy.[i]*

*Something already between us, not yet
 word, nor yet shine, yet
 beyond shadow, no longer blue fancy[xxxvi]*

*without sinking, to fall, to fall, &
 know nothing once more, happily
 til shiny is funny, loud shudders one
 curiously, til maybe the clouds are
 passing or is it really the earth?[viii]
 without sinking to fall, to fall, &
 know nothing once more, happily
 there is attraction among all things,
 there is will to creation, will to annihilation[xvi]*

*To play one true note. To refuse the coin.
To reach beneath this life's nightly bed
of rubble & come up with a handful
of sunshine. Just once.[xviii]*

*I listen tonight for one true note. I hear
everywhere coins, clatter, asses dropping
into wooden seats.[xxviii]*

*To play one true note. To nail You
among the dense strews of a
dryly rotting haystack called Reality.[xxxvi]*

As the series went on it would deepen within itself & churn up utter change within me. These poems have become an extension both literally & figuratively of my singing soul, singing of & through the universal music. I sought this poetry always. 6 x 36 Nocturnes (the title changed slightly from its original) has become a deep philosophical obsession of mine, the poem all my others led me to, 360 poems (when completed) which have accompanied me as I them across the continent & back & again, the months, now years, whereto in their conclusion I cannot now say, & thereafter I shall not imagine.

One other significant series inaugurated in this issue. Inspired by the psychedelic anthologies created for Burning Man 1999 & 2000, I decided to start featuring the essays from these books (& their subsequent volumes) in The Cenacle—to make more obvious the partisan leanings of the journal. Aldous Huxley's "Culture & the Individual" was a righteous beginning for this idea:

How should the psychedelics be administered? Under what circumstance, with what kind of preparation and follow-up? These are questions that must be answered empirically, by large-scale experiment. Man's collective mind has a high degree of viscosity and flows from one position to another with the reluctant deliberation of an ebbing tide of sludge. But in a world of explosive population increase, of headlong technological advance and of militant nationalism, the time at our disposal is strictly limited. We must discover, and discover very soon, new energy sources for overcoming our society's psychological inertia, better solvents for liquefying the sludgy stickiness of an anachronistic state of mind.

Huxley warns as others have before & since then. The world staggers on.

The remaining months of the year I romanced open-hearted strangers by distance til a weekend near year's end, around the same time as the twelfth anniversary Jellicle Guild meeting, I held close one of these strangers & maybe the candlelight & incense of her Montreal bedroom closed the spaces between us for a little while. I don't know. I'd chosen, when offered otherwise, to stay around this world & pursue things along awhile. December 2000 & I was sticky tangled in its sludgy matters for better & worse. The new year coming next held unbelievable furtherances of all this. My heart would tug open wider, & still more, & thereafter disintegrate. And beyond that . . . only still elsewhere.



To be continued in Cenacle / 53 / October 2004



Judih Haggai



Listen to the Jasmine

as sundown sings its low notes
we listen to the jasmine
coffee gentle with cardamon
fingers stroking twilight

a pause to sip the earth evolving
treetops told to meteors
neptune nudging nearer
our feet breathe the cosmic hush

Day Collaged Akilter

odd, how steel plates melt at freezing point
shatter like last night
as i hold too loose, toulouse!
find another way to speak
language cringes at backward tongues

meaning to share a vision
the day collaged akilter
askew, ask you? know what i mean?

gone like my favorite song
replay never long enough
what i want to say—
let's move on

So Good to Hear your Voice

I love hearing
your screams, laughter,
cries
so good to hear
the bullshit, the trauma
the joy

I love listening
to the jokes, the illusions
the falling through the ice
the sound of hair pulling
shoulder bending
knee cracking

Your voice filled sadness
tears choked back
long distance static
short distant yearn
a kiss pressed against an overseas rate

So good to share a half-baked continent
as soya soaks in curry
with garlic chopped so thin
and lunch turns into dinnertime
atlantic heaves a frozen tide

So good to hear your voice
amplified heart encounter
intimate DNA banter

Dedicated to a man I love

You've left me again
with a thousand smiles

how I ache once more
(is it true you're gone?)
so short this time
such brief unfoldings

you've left

with eyes
to launch
a thousand heart waves

aura traced
kiss en route
towards destiny

my adoration
our shalom
smile steeped
in a thousand tears

It's True

it's true
you know it
not one more word
required

colours caught it
it's true
you know it
not one more shade
inspired

feelings wrenched
colours caught
it's true
you know it
not one more cry
desired

Lone Hiker

lone hiker
boots untied, muddy pillow
birds swoop, rocks roll
never alone
night's ensemble

stretching into sleep
never alone
dreams of berries
tossed acorns, squirrels stash
as winter tunes her bass

Raymond Soulard



New Period

(continued)

I am shakily reading the next item in the "Millennial Artist's Survival Guide." It says "Is Your Art Necessary?"

"Oh shit," I groan, and slump back onto my stool. Mr. Bob the barman knows well enough to draw me two fresh pints of Guinness Xtra Stout.

"That's an easy question," says Rebecca brightly. Sure, sure.

To evade the question entirely, at least for a minute or two, I ask Mr. Bob for a nickel & promise to show him something nifty.

"Nifty?" he quizzes me, amused.

"Remember my poet-friend? The one who read poetry here one night & drank JDs & Cokes for hours after that?"

"Sure, sure. Nice fellow. Athlete, right?"

"When he was in college. Anyway, he showed me a trick for knowing when your pint of Guinness is ready."

Rebecca leans nearer me, delighted, a patient feast of Beauty.

"You're the feast, writer-boy. My feast." Scaring me with her now-I'm-17-now-I'm-hungrier-than-you thang.

I tap the coin against the full pint glass of Guinness. "It's dull. Hear it? A dull sound. Now just wait."

We wait. I tap again in a minute or so. "Brighter! Now it's ready. It's settled." More settled than I am, it, so I swig, it, down.

Mr. Bob is impressed. "Nice trick. Son, may I tell you something?"

"Sure."

"Your art is necessary & your lady is impatient. Get it together."

I bring the second glass with me, wondering how this story came to be.

We step into the bandroom & go over to the little table beneath the front window. Several of the kids sit there already but Rebecca has lit them up to the special attachment she, her dad, Franny & I feel toward the place. And others too. I stop.

"Ray?" Rebecca's smile floats near me, glows.

I pull her by the hand toward the basement, the Ampitheatre, the hill above it.

"How seriously should I take this?"

"What do you mean?"

"Is my art necessary?' I don't know, really! I've never been without it!"

She presses my face to her mouth, smiling, but sternly. She know what's happening. I doubt my methods & my ends, doubt them from within & without.

"Your art is necessary," she says softly, firmly, as she presses me back onto the grass. "It's necessary & you know it."

"Is it any good anymore?"

She crawls on top of me but is careful to arrange herself so we can talk comfortably. Even when thus established, however, she still says nothing, no smile.

"I like it, but I can understand why you're upset sometimes."

"Why?"

"Because you're approaching familiar ground with an extreme, experimental sensibility."

"That's true."

"You have layers of reality & different dimensions of story & oh, so much! You don't know where it's going, you don't know if it works."

"I don't even know how I could discern if it works. It seems to be about about."

Now she smiles. Now she shifts, & heats up. "I love your writing. Just like you love my art & we both love my dad's music."

We face each other. Smacks of kiss exchanged.

I am there in that scene, holding my beautiful girl on that hill in that holy-contrived place but I am also here

high & alone in a small room listening to the Dead sing "Truckin'" from 1972

worrying at how it's all gone & how good it can really be anymore

wanting Americus to be the story more than myself thinking he will be in the next section if I ever get to it

wanting to marry Rebecca because it would be the kind of thing I want to do.

"Which is?"

"What?"

"What do you want to do, Ray? You know what it's like when art's necessary. But you're troubling so much about this now. So what do you want to write?"

I don't know. It seems like I want to write this grand experimental narrative that brings in much new & also plays more with recent ideas. So it should be easy. But much lately has become shadowed in doubt that I've lost my way. And I not only can't answer the questions I'm struggling with, but I'm not so sure I can articulate the questions accurately.

I look down at the pages, see how they accumulate

I look up from the pages yet feel no real progress occurring.

I look down at the page & know the magic down there; down there I can relive the night of my death & further the significance of it into Art!

I look up from the page from the gestating place where in I sit.

"Rebecca, this is so much that it scares me. I began this story to open up new worlds on page that transcribe to a degree the new worlds I'm finding in my consciousness. These are the places that I believe I must take myself & my Art"

"Yes"

"And these places are so new to me that until I find a way to relate with them myself, I can do no more than detail this struggle to others."

"Yes"

"Noone knows where I'm going or what any of its going to be like. Is my art necessary? Yes, at least in the sense that Art is an exalted exploration of the realms within human consciousness as well as the realms of which human consciousness is but a part."

"This sounds more like you."

"Well, I'm getting somewhere now."

"So, are you going to keep this story going?"

"Yes! I have to. This story is one great cosmic laboratory opening ever out & more out to what is possible. I have to keep chasing outward, as hard as that sometimes can be."

I pause. "Is your Art necessary?" I say at last.

The working men at Luna T's Cafe's barroom are annoyed at seeing my fat, furred countenance on the bar TV in place of the latest news reports on impeaching the President.

On the TV screen still, I repeat "Is your Art necessary?"

"What's he talking about?"

"Hey, barkeep, what happened to the news?"

"It's on right now. I think you should be listening closer."

So the range of drinking men at the bar, thus advised by a bartender they all know & trust, turn their collective attentions to me on the TV screen. I continue.

"It's a struggle for me to say. It's a simple truth that will not suffer itself to be abstracted or intellectualized.

"You are all artists. Each one of you is a suite of energies shot through with skin, blood, & bones. You are all artists. Each of you has the same name. That is, no name. You are all artists. Heaven outlines each of your figures, thin or thick.

"You are all artists. Your life is but one manner by which you can practice your art. Each of you is capable of mystical transformations. Each of you is capable of the smallest & grandest gesture, of Art, of Love, there is really no difference.

"Each of you is an Artist. But is your art necessary? Are you doing all you can? Are you following your sun? Are you practicing undifferentiation?"

"He's crazy. He's a looney tune."

"No, man, he's alright. He's got something good to say. Let's hear him out."

"I say he's a nut-case! Look at his eyes! They're glowing! Too many drugs."

"Let's just hear him out!"

"Something's about to happen! Beware & be aware! Who are you? I really want to know."

"He's just a poor confused sonufabitch. What happened to him? These stories used to be pretty solid. Pretty girls, rock music. The fucker knew how to write back then."

"You're wrong"

On the TV I say, "I have doubted my writing so much more than any of you could. I have become convinced that my imagination is as vast and bright as the field in which I sit, & empty. Starkly fucking empty. All vision, no ground. No grounding. A continual, chaotic alphabet fuck but no loving, no song, not really.

"I am sitting in a field covered in fullmoon light. It's never quiet here because there is a bonfire surrounded by legions of drummers. This is all my dream. I want all of you to see it. It's what matters to me now.

"Yet, I question the truth of this dream, the golden swirl of its Beauty. Have we arrived here, finally, if we can still see, if we can still desire?"

"Hey barman what is this?"

"Listen, buddy, he's busy. If you don't like what Ray's saying, leave. It's that simple. He doesn't keep anyone here who's unwilling."

"It's not that! I've been coming here for years, OK? I'm not a major character at all. I sit at the bar & drink. I'm happy to exist at all. But these stories used to be about something real. Like I said, about love or music, about something that we all deal with even if we're not crazy writer types. There was a connection I felt & I liked it. I liked it a lot. Who doesn't have a broken heart?"

"But what's all this about? It's all egghead stuff. And cracked eggheads at that. Why's he writing this? Why does he bother?"

I am bellowing "Become a Virgin!" over & over on the TV, frantic, blind, nearly gone.

"It's his New Period" says Mr. Bob, tired of these speculators. "Those stories you liked being in are over. He is writing. And he's, eh, waiting."

"For what?"

"For someone. He's waiting for someone to come to his door."

"Anyone? Who?"

I am now at the bar, ready to finish this. I pause.

"I am still learning how to love. I am still learning how blind & deaf I am. What many colors warm the pan of my perception? Few. What many musical notes am I maturing enough to embody? Few. What are the truths I am ready to burn for? What are the loves of which I have no doubt? Who is Godd to me that I am to him and there is no separateness, no question of birth & death & particles scattered alienated & alone?"

"I am still learning how to love. I am *still* learning *how* to love. And nobody can show me. I wait each night, in the sloughs of my dreams, for that final someone at the door. Who will come & relieve me of having to be an Artist, having a supernova of gestures, tenets & postulations to defend? Of having to maintain in tightness & form what wishes to expand, to dissolve, to become what I really am. Glowing, glowing undifferentiation."

"This guy's fucking nuts!"

"No. It makes sense. If you think about dreams & all that, it makes sense."

"I'm leaving. There's got to be a sane bar somewheres in Hartford."

I am tired of corporeality so upon saying the words 'glowing, glowing undifferentiation,' I dissolve into a glorious floating glow of white light continually breaking into the myriad of colors and falling back into white simultaneously.

The I writing above the page can only imagine what it is that the I inside the page is experiencing

The within's within. The gentle edging away from, beyond, psychedelia's vast, bright door, the discovering of trees, shrubs, weeds, flowers, calmer sunlight too, what is this? Am I back on the other side from where I came? No. No. For there is still that telltale glow, that being my secret sign that I've got a shitload of tramping to do but it will be OK.

"It will be OK" I say aloud to who's left. I'm blind & deaf now. I don't know how to see in this new land beyond the door, where the assuring trees & shrubs have exploded & suddenly vastness, blankness, silence, un-sound, please, I'm sorry, please, calm down, it's ok, you'll get used to it.

"You're just not mellow" says big Jim Reality lovingly as he helps me, lightly, sobbingly, implode back some.

Rebecca is there too. She's here. So am I. Again, I am not certain of what this means.

"It's OK," she says. She'll tell me what to do now. She'll tell me.

"Follow your sun" she sez. this sentiment is the next one listed on "The Millennial Artist's Survival Guide."

"I don't know how. I don't know if I want to anymore. I have a pretty fuckedup sun, it seems."

"Do you have a choice?"
 "Probably not. It's all I've got. It's just dark when I turn away from it."
 She nods. No scene, here, yet, just the profile of Rebecca's face, nodding.
 "If I'm writing this, I'm following my sun" I offer.
 She nods again. She's waiting. But this is hard. Another ragged sheaf of pages added to by a pen oft-filled with no more or less than blunt pain.
 "But not always."
 "No, I guess not."
 "Sometimes you've felt just, um, miraculous."
 "Yes."
 "Sometimes it's been worth it."
 "Yes! I agree, Rebecca."
 "Then stop fighting it. Listen to the things you say when you're feeling miraculous!"
 "I forget how."
 Rebecca Americus can't abide cowardice from an artist, whether from pain or ignorance or whatever. She believes in Art fiercely—as I do when I'm not a coward.
 "Follow your sun! What does this mean? Follow it, Ray! Don't just stand facing it or hide from it. Follow it. That's about action, and faith. Do it!"
 She's right. I believe in her words & their prescription.
 "Will you wait?" I ask timidly.
 Her profile smiles. "If you do it right, I'll be there on the other end."
 "Follow your sun." Hmm. Right. Follow your sun. Follow . . . your . . . sun.
 Follow. Sun.

Light & heat. Growth, continuance. Follow. Sun.
 I pull myself back from Luna T's Cafe, its world & people, & find myself here, Faneuil Hall, Boston, October 17, 1998, near 10 p.m., alone at a table where I was reading up to now a local magazine's account of the club scene. Me with my long, unwashed hair, raggy clothes, beat sneakers, no socks, my battered-some-but-serviceable body, looking at a list of clubs where the young, slender & shiny go—and around me right now some of the same waiting to crowd into a comedy club.

Tick. Tick. Follow. Sun. In a letter to beloved sister artist Brannon earlier, complaining that I lack my tribe despite this crowded metropolis & my half-dozen years living here.

Page 90 of this story & what do these pages contain if not lavish, devoted descriptions of my tribe?

The line toward the club's entrance moves slowly. A large window next to my table gives me view of the old Boston Custom House, once employer of Nathaniel Hawthorne, there he worked & there he longed for a slow, lavish taste of his beloved Sophia back in Salem.

Move to a bench outside, made uptight by a piercing, droning fire alarm, & more so by the indifference with which the crowd met it—false alarm, determined a trio of heavy-jacketed Boston firefighters.

Oh, noise everywhere. Drunks peaking too soon, even for this city. Clothes from the mall, wallets full of plastic cards, expectations of food, drink, a few laughs, no, my sun isn't here yet nostalgia for many years ago it was, i'm younger than that now

Follow. Sun. Tall, slender trees with yellowing leaves. Memories of the girls I kissed here, when I was less extended & better dressed. Brick flooring, nice. Nothing formerly meaningful ever disappears completely. Boston Brownie Company & their cheesecake brownie, yes Wolfe, o lost, but a tremor still of that lost pleasure.

Now Rebecca's with me, pretty blue eyes jagging about, painting mental canvases as she often does. She's near me, pleased, waits. The pages accumulate & hurt less than before.

A myriad of thin vertical awnings bespeckled with smiling Mickey Mouses hang from a nearby building.

Bricked ground here. Do visit. There's at least light magic here.

Rebecca's sketching now, pencil & a small pad. Angles of buildings, rises of trees, skewings of light, fragments of my grizzled visage.

"Follow your sun." Back at Luna T's bar the drinking has gotten wild. Is the World Series on tonight? Mr. Bob, at Americus's request, has declared an All You Can Drink Night after collecting everyone's car keys & a reasonable pot of cash. Lock the doors, dim the neon bar signs, drink up, boys, we'll be going at it for hours. The jukebox is rendered gratis & the tunes roll.

Rebecca is drawing with her right hand & fingering my long hair with her left. She's on a low fire but the activities of her hands won't leave her this way for long.

In the bandroom a group of kids are huddled together, mildly high on weed & E, trying to keep reasonably close to Beckah's ban on blatant dosing in that room & one of them is reading, lilting, singing passages from Thomas Wolfe's story "No Door" listen! "nine thousand enthusiasms back, twenty thousand nights of drunkenness ago, eight hundred parties, four million cruelties, nine thousand treacheries or fidelities, two hundred love affairs gone by" & on & on the kids crowding close to each other, sharing a delicious shiver follow your sun follow you sun follow your sunshine daydream sunshine daydream

& in the Ampitheatre someone presses the bonfire to blaze higher, more dancers arrive, the drummers press their rhythms into tighter, higher swirls fullmoon above as always & I am way down the field, tripping my balls off as Hartlee would say, & watching my family home burn down I am 8 or 9 & watching & crying as I didn't do back then I'm dying tonight please come to my funeral please dance at my wake

Rebecca's tongue is in my ear & I'm wishing everyone here could see how fucking beautiful she is she is my tribe she is she is my tribe fucking beautiful just stop. a deep breath or two. what's next?

"Practice undifferentiation" she purrs, hotter in her jeans & sweatshirt than a dozen of those ass-crammed shiny pants vaguely raised amateur spreadcakes.

She's definite about how she wants to, you know, practice undifferentiation.

Boys, my jacket's so gone that it's held together with safety pins. I'll not be arguing w/her on this point.

& of course we end up the train to ZombieTown & there is a man in our car reading a fat book his current page headed with the title "The Goal of Philosophy" & another man feeds upon a bag of corn chips & several others doze & the conductor's station-stop announcements are quiet & polite

Rebecca practices undifferentiation all over me having told me long ago then when I get dosed on writing she finds me very sexy this good because I'll bet my tattered sneakers just don't have the same effect

"I suppose you've turned 18 now, haven't you?" I whisper when for a moment my mouth is free

"Ex-jailbait. I'm sorry." Testing me.

Now tis time to practice undifferentiation Soulard-style

You're more jailbait than ever, I explain, bringing her wetly, noisily into my lap & I explain further that she & I gestate pleasures free of law & restraint, not tidied by guilt. Further along, my head beneath her sweatshirt, her laid out on several seats of the train car, I kiss her flat, soft stomach showing her with each kiss where a less exuberant bit of jailbait would flinch & withdraw

Would it be when my tongue wraps cobra round her nipples whilst my fingers ponder thrummingly her young, sweet crack? Or would it be when my tongue heads south for a run at multiple spasms? Would she wish I'd remained fantasy as I part her tight undertried ass for a mouth-gnawing or perhaps when I am straddling her or perhaps when my cock is gushing joyously into her mouth & she has to gag and then swallow or spit & capitulate?

But Rebecca you & I have cleared this train car of watchers & we ain't hardly begun has we?

Sweet Rebecca & I lick her hair to toe & listen to her breathe & now she's laughing because my fingers are tickling her & we are in love

"Practice undifferentiation" she reminds me, soft & illicit beyond jailbait & we split into pieces, merged pieces, tossed into various places in Luna T's to teach & to practice undifferentiation

a thick layer of sound in the barroom where there are hard fears to eradicate so we become hardrocking song & Rebecca offers each drinker breasts & thighs for himself & no doubt this emerges from the booze each of them feels this is a wonderful dream there is no danger here I am beneath the great length of Rebecca on the bartop as each drinker feeds & is gradually softened & drawn nearer but of course we pretend no treachery toward Mr. Bob yet he does not object to what he sees so we carry him untouched into the bandroom where Rebecca is rainbow colored liquid & the fears are easier to dissipate tho still there are boyfriends & girlfriends & insecurities & young cocks worried about misfiring & young thighs uncertain how much fun all of this should be but souls become liquid & it gets easier thereafter

finally into the Ampitheatre into the light & heat of the bonfire maybe some would not be able to get here any other way but fire-heat & fire-light & fullmoon & the dancers & drummers psychedelic vision invented thousands of years ago to help humanity careen forward beyond all is not as it seems unto we are if we only knew it already there Ray Ray Ray

"Ray!"

Rebecca is back in my arms alone, trembling & pale

"I'm sorry" she pants "I could but only do so much"

I'm not mad. My arms are full of my young lover who has turned 18 years old & trusted me to blow this far out into practice undifferentiation.

"I love you. You are you are. Here, with me" & I kiss her softly we entwine gently what we have built up recedes for now & she is with me & I am here in this universe right now to embody whom she desires to like & love & trust

practice undifferentiation

practice undifferentiation

love the one you're with

love the one you're with — — — — —

A decent while passes & then the Survival Guide advises "Go into the Flow" & this most certainly seems like a job for Jim Reality III who I find tonight sitting large & peaceable at the bar Luna T's Cafe, sipping a large glass of illegally unwatered gin; "martini" he calls this drink.

So I sidle up to the stool next to his, receive with thanks a pair of Guinness Xtra Stout pints from Mr. Bob, & say "Hello, Jim."

He turns toward me with benign wet drunken eyes, unneedful to deduce my identity or intent. "Peace," he mumbles with a half-formed sign made by his non-sipping hand.

Wishing we two were tripping instead, I go ahead & down my two pints, take a breath, & down the next two. Mr. Bob studies me, neutrally.

"How's the universe, Jim?" I asked politely.

Jim's face tightens & his mighty fist crashes down upon the bartop & he cries "We are here to exist!" He looks through me & goes beyond me & his look hits the back wall & there is a small *krak!* & he receives it back & he cries out again "We are here to exist!" & his next fist-slam doesn't hit the bartop even harder only because it is arrested in mid-air by Mr. Bob the barman.

"Easy, bud," Mr. Bob growls but benignly. He used to have nights like these all the time, in used up hotel rooms in minor league baseball towns.

"Calm down, Jim. It's OK." I'm ready to run but prepared moreso to restrain.

Jim's not calm. His utterance is the public pronouncement of many months, years, who knows how long? of thinking, observing, hurting, persisting. It has to be heard. He has to speak it.

"What do you mean, Jim?" I ask, flinching.

"They're not listening to Nature! They're not listening to their own hearts," Jim says, slowly, words spiked with pain.

Mr. Bob has returned to his side of the bar but still watches Jim for eruptions of cosmologically-induced violence.

Jim slumps back into his seat, a full-night's drinking taking its due after allowing one pure outburst. "Ah, balls" he mutters, sipping hard at his drink. Even waves away Mr. Bob's offer of another.

"Let's go smoke a bone, Jim."

His expression lightens a shade. "You want to?"

"Let's go."

Mr. Bob wishes me well with a glance. Doesn't take himself; understands, tho.

Jim & I step outside & walk slowly to the parking lot where his slim blue van *The Spleef* is parked in a far shadow (beneath a streetlamp whose bulb blew out under mysterious circumstances one night & has not been since replaced by way of strict orders from *Americus*).

We climb into the front seat and settle in. Jim hits the stereo cassette deck power button & the high-high music of a *Who* cassette blasts forth.

Jim focuses his shaky fingers & attention on rolling a bone— once he's allowed me to sniff his bag of weed, its sweet exotic smell, a mixture of hashish & Jamaican marijuana, he explains.

The music & the passing of the bone are sufficient in themselves for a time.

"Go into the flow," I observe, benignly.

Jim, embodying the ultimate meditative state, just this side of floating, hears me but does not reply aloud. I know, however, that he has heard because he smiles slightly. Minutes pass. The bone is lit again & goes back & forth. "Ah, the flow," he says, finally. But no more than that for the moment.

Much later in the night we are up on the parking garage roof with several others, come to see the view, come to pass among us a quart of Jack Daniel's whiskey that Mr. Bob allowed me to "borrow" for a while. "At least return me the bottle" he'd admonished.

"We are here to exist!" says Jim again, beyond violence & doubt. He's brought his guitar along & is tossing out bouquets of lightning bolt strummings to the clear cold night. The group of us form a circle around him, the bottle goes around one way, the joint the other.

OK here I go pressing forth again. Summoning starlight loose upon this

magical night I whisper luminously to the bright soul next to me, "go into the flow" & soon the words & the starlight have spread round our circle & ridden up & down Jim's guitar such that he's playing sparkles of notes that float amongst us & its time I think for us to enter the starlight go into the flow so I nod to Rebecca who flicks above us a tab of Goddpink that leads us easily into evanescence unto starlight sparkles now pink now rising now a flock of luminosities sweeping upward into the cosmos here we go here we go flock of luminosities follow us into the heavens flock of luminosities follow us beyond the heavens beings beyond names & bodies beings now ripples in the all-vast being each of us a note each of us a sparkle in a cosmos of musical light words break up here & become very funny as I remember the fire in the Ampitheatre & how I laughed & laughed & laughed most of that night that I died oh death what a funny thought an adult's foolish fear in a child's perfect nativity of a universe

"go into the flow" hardly begins to tell since here always is the flow & all is ever well & we are all, if we only knew it, already there, already in the flow

we are already there
we are already there

And here I am, days again gone by, sitting at the bar, a single undrunk pint of Guinness before me, I am fairly slumped in my seat.

"Son?"

How can this keep going? Is it necessary?

"Son?"

I was looking at a recent novel today, marvelling at its ability to tell a good story, characterizations & description & good style—

"Are you doing all you can?"

I look up. There's Mr. Bob the barman smiling at me. "Next item on the list," he explains.

"Oh"

"Son, you can't be what you're not. And you can't write but like yourself." He stops. Merciful, he serves me a glass of ice water, & fixes one for himself too.

"Thanks."

"You know, when I was a ballplayer, Willie Mays was in his heyday. Great hitter. Great fielder. I wanted to be like him. I couldn't figure out why I wasn't more like him."

"This isn't helping."

"Let me finish. So I wanted to be like him. Play the game beautifully like him. Like a dream. Like it was the most natural thing to hit a ball 350 feet or leap in the air & catch one easy."

"And?"

"And I wasn't him. I never made it to the big leagues. But, Ray, there I was, on a minor league club & I'd probably played every position on the field including relief pitcher!"

"Does that make you feel better?"

"Willie Mays never pitched. Not one ball. And I never played in the bigs. But I loved the game & I still do & I played outfield & relief pitched in the same games sometimes. And hit a few long balls too. It wasn't any less. It made me a better coach because there wasn't anything I hadn't done."

"So I'm not Hawthorne or Updike but it's OK because I write poetry & fiction?"

"No. What I'm saying is what your Professor Huxley says with prettier words: be what you are. And your own list: do all you can. Make sure you're

doing all you can. Stop pissing your time away & get to work!"

He's right.

I walk into the bandroom; it's empty & dark. Am I doing all I can? How would I know? Would I ask fewer questions? More?

I imagine the bonfire on the bandstage, & the dancers & the drums. But no—not yet at least.

On into the Ampitheatre & down the hill in & amongst the drummers, now just a few & I can see it's almost dawn & it's again the night I died back in early August 1998. I am wearing a white t-shirt w/a green & orange design on it, & beat jeans & beat black sneakers & I am tripping, have been for hours, most of them far away down the field, laughing at the absurdity of the drums, dancing by myself, swinging a flashlight around like a scimitar, witnessing my family's house burn down as it did nearly 30 years ago & crying this is so intense I have to watch out for my notebook mustn't lose it especially now as I approach the drummers & for awhile I dance, maybe hours, filled with cosmic spasms that toss me into the air like the night has taken me as one of her many lovers I am being carnally wrung from within tossed up again & again I am never going to leave this moment for as long as I live not really for this is my funeral commemorating the past 17 years of my life & tonight I am crossing the chasm to the new period beyond & this is my wake too the logic here thrust from intuition not linguistics & I am again sitting in the dirt with the drum I found & I am tripping so hard that the rhythmic drum jamming is hard to keep up with but I watch the full moon above & agree with her that as long as we hold each other like this I will drum well, even excellently & so it goes until I close my eyes & dissolve inside electric patterns of shifting colors & shapes & then my drumming speeds & slows perhaps like playing the rising & falling waves of deep ocean night I have never done this before, drummed like this, died like this am I doing all I can? Yes, this night I am—I am dancing & drumming & laughing & crying at my own death & wake I am learning how much 'doing all I can' means spasms of body & thought & heart & coupling with full moon & drumming with strangers I know & love only tonight in the dirt of a field in the Northern Vermont woods I am doing all I can tonight me & my pen & my body & my tab & a half of LSD yes I am doing all I can this is what it's like to die in order to dance anew & share the weaker hours with the coming & going souls no door no window between me & the universe I breathe it & it breathes me there is no difference between us & sometimes since this night I have sat in dull housed moments & comforted myself by thinking through the ceiling above me to unseen stars so far away they're there all the wonderful time

but go further—become unafraid—off goes ordinary white light & on comes the red-light-bulb-mysterioso—from Amante—and the music is pressing into my ears headphones this a transitional paragraph watch it end feel the sense of dissolve hereon

I am still in the Ampitheatre the night of my death, wake, & funeral but too it is early November & I am dressed in New Period sparkles & chords it's 3:30 in the morning then now & I am inviting myself to gaze through Vermont stars to the transparent ceiling beyond & I am courting myself to think there is no then where I am no longer am & all there is is here right now i am doing all that i can right now telling the only story I've ever known

i think about my dreams well into the daylight hours these days & i think about my death & how i seem to understand it less as I seek to apply it more i mean damn if i didn't die that night! And decide I'd died at age 17 too! & wouldn't some say it was the combination of a deep depression, recent illness, & use of an especially potent psychedelic drug under the very suggestive circumstances of full moon, woods, drummers, dancers, bonfire that caused me

an extreme physiological reaction that I've chosen to call my death & rebirth yet how to explain that I've essentially re-imagined my life in every possible way since come out of this cataclysmic experience with vaster resolve, deeper humility, & sublimer appreciation of the Art that is Cosmos is Godd is I is You is All can nothing magical have happened? Yes—I do believe something magical happened, the experience of the Truth.

"Are you OK, Son?"

"Yah. Thanks. I'm sorry I didn't appreciate your story earlier."

"It's OK. Persist, Ray. You've got to persist. All of us believe in you."

"I think about my dreams a lot. And about dreaming. It's a whole other life, Mr. Bob. I think I want it to shade into my waking life. I think it wants to." Mr. Bob is called away to fill several drink orders. He looks over to me, though, when he can, & I feel his concern, but I feel his trust even more.

This world is important. I pull back from it, now looking at it on the red-lit page below me, here I am, ZombieTown 3:46 a.m., determined to make it, to do all that I can, I am doing all that I can, hunting in this broken world for scattered pieces I can show to the struggling & say: here's hope: a smile freely shared: an eager dog barking for a rough petting hand: an empty street needing a careening soul's eye: a poet-dancer-fellaheen-mystic on a ferryboat smoking a hand-made cigarette & watching the cracked lips of a half-ghost tell of decades-old Mexico City ecstasies & there is a wine-skin handed amongst bones & another man plays his guitar harder & harder going for the One Eternal Note, breaking strings to near the Purity obvious & obscure & listen to Noisy Children rock harder & harder & my young lover Rebecca is draped across my legs & squeezing me & Dr. Knickerbocker shakily reads about mercy in his grandmother's Bible the one with the iron claps & he wants another drink not mercy & listen the sky is full of more than stars & the Ampitheatre is filling again I am trying to find a way to tell the only story I know it nears 4 a.m. & I can't sleep but have to watch existential TV cop show & worry & love

& vote tomorrow Election Day
 & job-hunt tomorrow money's dwindling
 & wonder what the hell is all this
 how can REM be so good as a threesome?
 when will I trip again?
 what's next on the damned list?
 when will it be over?
 has it finally begun?
 is this what it's like?

I want to go on: I want to get laid by three stars & a supernova: I want to hear varieties of musical notes when I write: Rebecca's stopping me because someone's crying: you're crying, she says: fuck punctuation marks, I reply & fuck sleep & fuck time & fuck space I need a sandwich Rebecca, stop me now—

And I know this will go on & on because this imagined world depends on me & I can't find a way to deny it. All I can do is hang on until the guitars strumming starts again, waiting, the guitars will start again too, the drums & the dancing too & the fires, they'll start again

"Jim"

"Uhn?"

"I'm waiting for the music to start up again"

"Sorry, guy. I'm burnt. I've got to go home."

"Can I ask you a question?"

"Yah."

"Do you know the next item on the 'Millennial Artist's Survival Guide'?"

"No."

"Who are you?"

"Great song, man."

"It's more than a song. It's a hard question. Now we can discuss it or you can play it."

"I'll need another drink."

"I'll play barman. Everyone's gone home."

"Can we smoke in here? If we're discreet?"

"Fire one up."

Jim raises up from his stool at the bar & staggers over to a table. I put a large glass of straight gin in front of him while he tunes his guitar. I can see he's wavering, nearly gone.

Quick retreat into the bandroom into a dark recess where sits turntable & LPs. Find the right song. Switch on the speakers in both bandroom & barroom. Crackle, crackle, power chords, very lovely loud

I wait . . . then return to the barroom where Jim is pounding music out of his guitar, now on his feet, now bellowing the words Townshend wrote on the crumbling edge

*I woke up in a Soho doorway
a policeman knew my name
he said I go sleep at home tonight
if I could get up & walk away*

dwindling disintegrating into the music, the easy release, ecstatic evanescence, who are you, are you, who, who, I really want to know, think of the question from without, who are you, look at yourself from way down the field, who are you, who are you, there you are, tight & identity-laden, a label clothed in rags, a tube digesting & dispelling, flesh-clogged spirit, ego-inhibited body, a heart of mumbles & denials, who are you, i really want to know, who, who, who, who Jim slumps back down with his drink, forgets even to light up the bone in a bag in his pocket, who who who I return to the turntable & switch off the power we've established the question as answer, the song is sung again, & we're ready to begin—

Or maybe not. Jim's moving to depart with what energy & motivation he has left. Hands me the joint. "This won't tell you who you are, but it will help you out while you're looking."

"Jim, I need you, man."

The blue-grey eyes open & cohere for a moment. "Not tonight, guy. And not just because I'm burnt. Go for it yourself tonight. Tell me about it tomorrow."

"Are you sure?"

He nods.

When Jim's sure about something, he's never wrong. So I give him a hug, he says "peace" & he goes.

I'm alone in Luna T's Cafe holding an unlit joint in my hand, mulling on the darkness. OK. Not why to do this but how.

Snag a pack of matches from behind the bar & light up the joint. Jukebox? Not right now. Pint of Guinness? No. Smoke up in the darkness & see what comes.

Jim's weed has always been good but this new stuff is incredible. He'd mentioned it was Jamaican mixed with hashish. Well alright.

It's not acid but it's not so very different. A few good inhales & the room has become soft, much more presence & flow than a few minutes ago.

Soft but still familiar, for awhile, but then soft & new, & pressing,
& conscious?

Soft in a way again familiar, a sentient softness . . . a female softness
. . . but who? Noone else is here & noone has come in . . . Who?

"Who's there?"

No answer.

"Rebecca?"

Nothing.

Could be Merry Muse or some other female figure, I don't know. Franny?

"Who are you?" suddenly asks the female presence, a voice I can't identify
but—

"Who are you?"

"Who the fuck are you?"

"I really want to know."

No patience for games, I go back to smoking my joint. Nice weed,
even with the tricks.

"Go into the Ampitheatre."

"Why? You don't interest me. I have half a joint, all the beer I can drink, &
silence. I have my notebooks. Do you have anything to compete with that?"

"You can't make things into what they're not! Why am I here? You have to
find out. You have to know."

So much for getting stoned the easy way. Another fucking test. Fuck with
Soulard's emotions until he's too messed up to think clearly, muchless well,
anymore.

"Let's go, bitch."

"Who are you?" is a question I faced down, bare-knuckled, on the
dewey fullmoon night I spent here in August. Brawled with it, cried, laughed,
danced, drummed. It was only after I gave up that the needed answer began
to form.

But could I say now? Hm.

I can't make out the all-night dancers & drummers, & even the bonfire
is muddled. I'm here for certain but here as I see it is damp, beclouded.

"You can't take it away from me!" I yell. "Whoever you are! I know
what happened here! I know what happened to me here!"

"Why are you so ready for a fight?" the voice asks.

The murk thickens & I find I can lean back into it w/o falling.

She speaks again: "The questions you've been asking all your life
haven't gone away."

"Which questions?"

Impatient: "About love. And family. About free will & circumstance.
You can't disintegrate them by abstraction."

"I have Rebecca."

"Not forever. You know that."

"Who are you?"

"It doesn't matter. You created me to do this. I'm forcing you to
keep seeing how much is at stake here."

"My conscience is female?"

"Not your conscience exactly," There's a pause then a laughter like
antique chimes & then silence.

The murk recedes.

Remembering. The absolute worlds of gone moments. Something durable

& insistent in the soul paws at old wounds, to dull them, to cover them, to obscure them somehow.

Standing near a window, watching a disappearing lover's car depart. The residual photograph taken an hour or two before that. "Let's say goodbye here," said the girl, concluded the door.

A different girl, now a bitter woman, making disappointment into song, birthing her laughter, thanking her.

Another, this one a moustach'd man, crazy pen, pretty guitar, old book, cup of diner coffee, morning paper, old albums, several beers, things change, love scurries, words, drip, history cracks, there's nothing inside.

Nights at bars, in apartments, high here, dosed there, kissing til the silent air smacks sensually.

What a fucked idea time is! How it explains nothing!

Next tenet: Something's About to Happen. A net cast into black waters is caught & dragged down. The air clears of its toxins. No sign of the freighter. Clear air, black water, bubbles trace descent.

Something's About to Happen. A jagged formation of jets passes over a rousing herd of buffalo. Electric fences with cut power lines. A hard rush. Nearing thought.

Something's About to Happen. Beyond the book's talkings & the blinking boxes of diminutive noise. Less fear. Less & less. More wings. The universe is a nest. We're learning how to build it.

Something's About to Happen. The anxious buzzing's passing from our dreams to our limbs. I look at pink cheeks these days & ask myself harder questions. I know I'll fill my bag of spasms before long.

Luna T's Cafe dissipates for a moment. I consider its absence. Blink. Blink. Blink. Watch fixtional universe go on & off.

Watch a pen piss out its ink but no relief, nothing.

Canvas bag of spasms marked FRAGILE GOODS.

Nothing exists.

More & more

Convince me otherwise

OK—fuck that—follow the moment's music—toss into it—immolate, better & better

stop.

OK—jump, go, higher & higher—jump, within's within

stop!

A band materializes & I remember now how it began & why slowly remember why and they sing "Blood in the streets in the town of New Haven" & later more bodies, immolate & immolate & reinvent & reinvent & "Blood on the rise it's following me." Start again. We are already here. Happy, thick between the slices. Be as mean as a flower. Lick tenderly.

Will Luna T's come back, yes? In the space of a few more power chords, yes. Noisy lights. Predominant music, floor, ceiling, air. Sin-is-the-sea, ah!

Bring it back, barstool by barstool. Bring it back in the delight of sexstained, beerstained, much-snored-upon Manager's Office couch.

Familiar shadow near jukebox. Poster of Hendrix. Posters of WhoBeatlesREMNoisyChildrenNeilYoungYesYesYes splotches beertaps bandstage little table

Something's About to Happen. The band's been warming up, more & more, for almost 20 years.

A walking cane. Look—Knickerbocker's dead on his stool! Now look—he's OK.

Time is fucked. Tells nothing.

I find myself now sitting at the little table beneath the front window in the bandroom of Luna T's Cafe. Only light is from a streetlamp through the window. Room is empty but me & my notebook & pen . . . until Rebecca comes in.

She begins to sit down on the seat opposite mine until I make a motion & she materializes in my lap. She hugs me hard, unable to hold back.

"Seems like you have all the strange adventures now that my dad used to have," she says softly, between several kisses.

"Just wait til the next part of this story," I say, damned well enjoying her affections.

"Is that soon?" she asks, failing to shroud her interest.

I count my pages. "About 20 more pages of this, just two more tenets from the list, and Americus returns to this story's pages full-time."

"He understands, yknow."

"What?"

"All, um, this. He knows it's necessary. We had a good talk today."

I say nothing. Soak in girl-warmth. Bathe in love. Rebecca's skin is fair & smooth. Her hair is a glinty brown, eyes a soft, dark blue.

"18 years old."

"Yes."

"Stuck with an old fuck like me."

She laughs, candy wind. "I'm not stuck with you, you're stuck with me!"

"Hm."

Rebecca knows not to coddle me, knows I'm uncertain, flailing, wish to be roused, neither berated nor smoothed. She says, "The next tenet is 'beware & be aware.'"

"Yes. Jim told me that one."

"When?"

"I don't know. We were stoned, in his van, listening to music. Or maybe it was in one of his letters. It doesn't matter. It's sound."

Rebecca rests her head on my chest. Our fingers twine & play. "What do we do now?"

What I want to do now is carry this beautiful woman to a bed & spend all night trying to express a fraction of my love for her. But I need to do something else.

"Rebecca, I want you to help me with this one." She perks up. "I've been alone a lot lately. It's better with you. Will you help me?" Hell, I even smile.

"Of course!"

Her face is that of a beautiful girl's but her expression is part sage & part puppy.

"Let's leave here & go to your apartment. We'll go slow & figure it out."

"OK."

For a moment, I let go. We kiss spectral-sweet, floods & chuckles, singing, buzzing, the deepest scriptures of skin on skin, song beyond song, beyond worlds & notes

Beware. Be aware. Let's begin.

I leave for a moment. I return. "6618752HEAD," I remark, motioning

Rebecca to stand up.

She smiles. Says Nothing. Prettier version of her father, moreso every day.

"I saw that written in a grout crack between two tiles in the men's room. Vertically, reading up to down."

She looks up at me smiling, but now quizzing.

"There's Art everywhere, Rebecca. We can make it from anything."

"I know."

"I am putting that graffito in this story for this reason. I mean, we're about to go cosmic, again, here but seeing that scrawl & mentioning it seemed necessary."

Her smile increases, begins talking. Dancing in waves, shimmering in particles I can now see Rebecca I want to love you in new ways beyond physical & poetical I want us to learn how to merge an atom at a time & then break up in collaborative chunks I want to be aware of you beware of you blindly loudly subtly how do we become doors that step through each other simultaneously how can I wear your mystery renewed by my native colors somewhere we sit & face each other. several places at once we sit & face each other. there is electric light. there is star-driven dim. there is the darkness loving noises disintegrate

she is following me, trusting, so I follow her following me

laughter

what did one wall say to the other?

we are music, tall tall song

hands touch lightly in several places a body lit up night city bright

& somewhere I say

move closer & I undress you to reveal a deeper dream

a party we arrived at 40 years ago, a loft party, artists studio & some of your pictures are hung

& I am licking you down in the small of your back your breath snorting out in landmines

& it is early 1967 we are in Golden Gate Park building the Human Bubble from soap, wildflowers & Owlsley Crimson

& somewhat I am riding you on a comet some future genius has harnessed for space travel we have been making love for several decades now our eyes fried by space our backs frozen putty but somehow your tongue has grown very long & snakes around my cock & squeezes & squeezes & drinks & finds the flesh malleable enough to puncture & so plays notes with a squeeze-a here & a squeeze-a there and the comet is breaking up oh sweet Godd the come is finally breaking up so as to join us

follow your bliss

smoke a bigger bong

you're not gone on love

nearly enough

we are spread to many places & times until a Word & a gesture coalesce us within Cement Park, even clothed, you're in my lap, you're kissing my face & crying hard because you do not cry you're crying harder

"What's wrong, Rebecca?"

She says nothing. Crying abates. Softens in my arms. I say no more. Just rock her & wait.

Softly: "You're a lot like my dad." I don't reply. I hold her, completely, wait for sage to explain puppy.

"Except it's different with me & him. We trust each other. We have a, um, unbreakable promise that we'll always come back to each other."

"Rebecca, I love you. That's all I can say."

She sits up in my lap, now bright-eyed. "I know! And it's different & it's good & I love you too."

"And?"

She stares inside me, for awhile, finds nothing much amiss, says, "With my dad I've got certainty. But you & I have what he's got with Franny. Mystery."

"Mystery."

She nods. She's sad again. I don't know what to say. She waits. "Would it help if we married, Rebecca?"

Rebecca laughs. I've spoken comically. The wrong question. But the right kind of question. She hugs me again, smiling, loving; our doors open simultaneously & here we are, facing each other.

Rebecca decides she likes me as her chair so we talk within the fireplace of our touch.

"I need your help. I want us to press further with our experiment."

"But not in the Ampitheatre?"

I shake my head. "No. At least not in the way we've been doing it." I pause, wondering how far past guideposts I've gone.

"We're going to see if we can get to the Ampitheatre in a new way."

She's waiting for more details & I want to tell her but somehow—just do it, that's all. I stand tho she manages to stay in my arms, giggling.

"OK, I'll carry you."

"Straight to our bed?"

"Yes."

"And will you sing to me while we go?"

She loves when I sing to her in my cracked tuneless voice. So I do. I sing Beatles songs, one after the next, & she laughs and pulls my face down to drench it in kisses & we finally reach 50 Harvest Street & I sing softly as I carry her up the stairs; it's late, there are neighbors.

I am grateful when Franny opens the door. I try to hand Rebecca to her but this doesn't work so Franny merely assists in carrying her to her, that is our, bed. Rebecca is warm with love, bright with love.

"Where's Dad?"

"Sleeping, honey."

"Can we wake him? So we can all be together tonight?"

Franny looks at me; damned polite deferential Dixie woman that she is.

"We'll go to him," I say, but explain no further.

Franny continues to look at me. She & I have been lovers; our borders are still very soft. She's waiting, & a little hopeful. Rebecca's waiting, too, and not the least fearful now.

A quartet of beautiful eyes look at me. A pair of beautiful faces wait. I don't know what to say; the resolve I'd had is gone.

Rebecca slides into my grasp, soft smiling creature, settles draped on me. Franny waits. I glare at her. She smiles at me more deeply.

"You know what we have to do."

"No."

"Of course you do."

"No. Really."

In a flick, they're gone. The room is empty. There isn't a room, really, or a coherent, peopled, thing'd, spirit-filled world anymore. Consciousness. Mine. That's all. I guess that's all there's ever been. Words decorate the blankness of

the sheet. Words stain blankness with music.

Words are magic. Words are stars. I don't understand them, what they do, why they matter.

"I don't understand, Rebecca."

No answer. No possibility of an answer right now.

I remember that I've arrived somehow at the final tenet of "The Millennial Artist's Survival Guide": "Become a Virgin."

What did I mean when I wrote this? Not a falling back, I think, but a pressing forth.

I want Rebecca with me but am unable to conjure her. But whether or not she exists on this page again, & even though she is imaginary despite her importance to me, this world has been different because of her. She matters. I'll wait for her.

What of Rich Americus? What of Luna T's Cafe? I can't deny them. I spent 17 years writing the Cement Park stories.

I'm trying to become a virgin.

"Americus."

"I'm here."

"When did this stop being about you? When did I stop trying to write fine American prose? How did this become a screed promoting LSD, free love, & the joys of mixing Zen, subatomic physics & self-immolation?"

"Tell the truth."

"Is this the truth?"

"The truth is what's left over when you deny or reject everything else."

"My truth is my faith in Art, whether I'm maker or receiver. Art as Godd. Art as Godd. Art as Acid. Art as Free Love. Art as self-immolation. Art as time. Art as what's beyond time. Art as what I'm about at this moment, November 21, 1998, 5:50 p.m., ZuZu's Coffee Bar, Hartford, Connecticut, a shadowy femme face seen from a floor below, the deep bass beat of a song more blood & semen than note & drumbeat. Art as tree. Art as Music. Art as the solid objects I sit amongst writing about a placeless white space of consciousness on marked pieces of blank sheets of paper. Art as the coming & going & its irrelevance. Art as noise behind sense. Art inside colors, what colors are in secret.

"Art as borders to burning dreams. Art as shiny motes in shadows seen from dark, anarchic hours."

"Yes"

Calm down. Shift of consciousness. Re-ordering of sensibilities. Fill in white with colors, many of them, never enough of them. Calm down.

Fill in what was missing, fill in people & place, return to what went on pages ago, return & reinvent

& reinvent

& reinvent

& reinvent

"We'll go to him," I say, & draw my woman closer to explain further . . .

Find a way to tell the story that needs to be told now. If there needs to be wet skin, Owsley Crimson, bonfires & drums, full moons & additional rebirths, let there be all of these & more.

There can't be clothes hereon.

"Of course not" smirks Franny knowing she'll be nude & happier shortly.

I lie back on Rebecca's bed & my women drape around me. I think: these are my women. Part of my tribe. There is agreement here among us, softness, none of us are going away.

The lights are off & a girl's lips kiss me & I don't know whose. There was a moment when I dwelled in blankness relieved by this smooth slow kiss. I keep my hands flat at my sides & resist knowing her identity. This kiss is free, freely given, freely lasting, freely floating. It could be Rebecca's, could be Franny's, or I could be again residing in absence, a blackness now, with only these kissing lips to remind me of what else, who else, where other.

This kiss balances between her & me, it is like a wet bright star we hold high between us. A kiss that shifts, adjusts hot skin to hot skin, awaits patiently the clash of icons, the thrash of tongues.

Liquid belief.

But I want more. I have the kiss. I want the girl. Both of them. All of them.

Americus, you're going to dream us, now, you lying asleep in your bedroom next to this bedroom, you're going to dream us.

I am holding your wife, holding you why in her nightgown, long & pink, I am holding my wife, we are her husband, she is our wife, I am kissing her inside your dream inside the story among the many stars & realities around & about

"Keep on rockin' in the free World!" roars Jim Reality from faraway as I remove Franny's veils.

"You removed my veils a long time ago," Franny says, smiling but unmoved by anything but the truth.

Rebecca hangs on me, unsure but floating. I finish with Franny & together we share undressing her. We share her inside of Americus's dream.

"You can't be close enough to me," Rebecca growls.

Americus's dream squeezes us, squeezes us harder, and, dream-beings, we merge, it's difficult, it becomes easier, we are three bodies now with one set of eyes, now with one torso, but three souls, twined, twisted, oh goodness, we are one body of three souls, the universe is one body of many souls, the universe is an infinitude of vibrations come from the Eternal Note

Americus's dream loosens its hold on us & we are still on the bed in the dream inside this story & I think we should go into Americus's room where he lies asleep dreaming of us & we agree

We approach his naked sleeping body inside whose body we are contained, dreaming, & we disintegrate into arms and multiple eyes & a nice display of orifices & genitals

but he does not wake he receives & does not react

he receives & receives until we are inside the dream he is now having in which we share his dreaming of us coming into his room to love him

dream . . . who is dreaming who at this point . . . I help us take over . . . to dream of him dreaming of us . . . to find some impossible place where we are on the same plane white on white black on black

stop. strum. find a good bass guitar strum & an accompanying suggestive beat
stop. strum. are there lyrics? —sing boy!

"there is a secret joy among these times a within's within, a known & spectral thing"

sing, now guitars, several, hard, Luna T's Cafe's stage, crowds dancing & high sing on. sing. oh, sing.

He falls. Become a virgin. He rises. "I am you & you are me & we are the world beyond eyes," he explains, past singing.

"Secret joy!" someone shouts.

"Within's within!" hollers someone else.

"A kiss. A tab. Blue dusk!" says a femme, high & gleeful.

"The secret joy is always beginning now!" I conclude glad to be among Noisy Children & at Luna T's bandstage.

Long live Rock!

I go into the bar to fetch as many pitchers & bottles as Mr. Bob will let me.

"What's all that hippy shit in there?" demands one drunken barside denizen.

"Soulard, what happened to you?" adds another.

"We liked the old shit. Booze & tits!"

"Now you're a junkie!"

I cringe. I retreat. "I'm not tripping right now" I whimper.

Mercy intervenes. "He's where all of you want to be after ten or twelve drinks. He's leaped off the chasm!" uncharacteristically growls Mr. Bob the barman. "Are you going to follow or stick to lagers?"

The denizens mumble & quiet down, cowed.

Dr. Arnold T. Knickerbocker briefly raises his walking can to me, in salute.

How can I not go on?



To be continued in *Cenacle* / 53 / October 2004

Timothy Leary, Gary Snyder,
Alan Watts, & Allen Ginsberg



The Houseboat Summit: February 1967, Sausalito, California

[Taken from *The Oracle* Issue no. 7]

Part One: Changes

Watts: Look, we're going to discuss where it's going . . . the whole problem of whether to drop out or take over.

Leary: Or anything in between?

Watts: Or anything in between, sure.

Leary: Cop out . . . drop in . . .

Snyder: I see it as the problem about whether or not to throw all your energies to the subculture or try to maintain some communication network within the main culture.

Watts: Yes. All right. Now look . . . I would like to make a preliminary announcement so that it has a certain coherence.

This is Alan Watts speaking, and I'm this evening, on my ferry boat, the host to a fascinating party sponsored by the San Francisco *Oracle*, which is our new underground paper, far-outter than any far-out that has yet been seen. And we have here, members of the staff of the *Oracle*. We have Allen Ginsberg, poet, and rabbinic saddhu. We have Timothy Leary, about whom nothing needs to be said (laughs). And Gary Snyder, also poet, Zen monk, and old friend of many years.

Ginsberg: This swami wants you to introduce him in Berkeley. He's going to have a Kirtan to sanctify the peace movement. So what I said is, he ought to invite Jerry Rubin and Mario Savio, and his cohorts. And he said: "Great, great, great!"

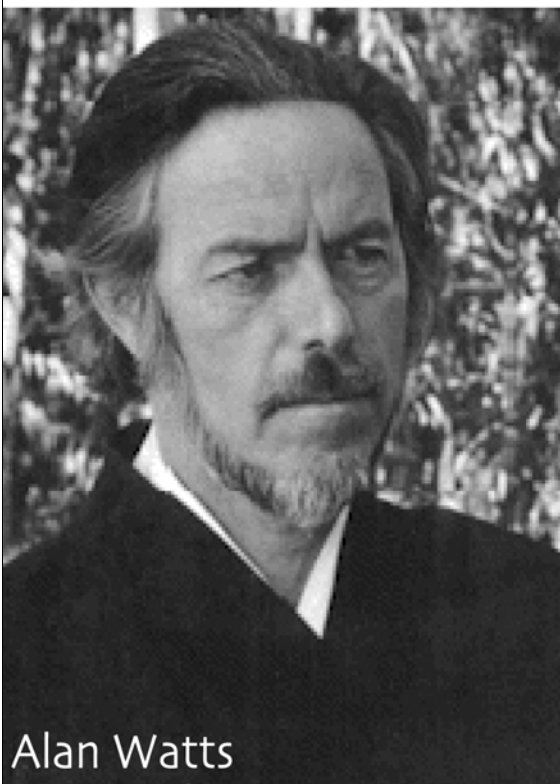
So I said, "Why don't you invite the Hell's Angels, too?" He said: "Great, great, great! When are we gonna get hold of them?" So I think that's one next feature . . .

Watts: You know, what is being said here, isn't it: To sanctify the peace movement is to take the violence out of it.

Ginsberg: Well, to point attention to its root nature, which is desire for peace, which is equivalent to the goals of all the wisdom schools and all the Saddhanas.

A Pacifist on the Rampage

Watts: Yes, but it isn't so until sanctified. That is to say, I have found in practice that nothing is more violent than peace movements. You know, when you get a pacifist on the rampage, nobody can be more emotionally bound and intolerant and full of hatred.



Alan Watts



Allen Ginsberg



Gary Snyder



Timothy Leary

And I think this is the thing that many of us understand in common, that we are trying to take moral violence out of all those efforts that are being made to bring human beings into a harmonious relationship.

Ginsberg: Now, how much of that did the peace movement people in Berkeley realize?

Watts: I don't think they realize it at all. I think they're still working on the basis of moral violence, just as Gandhi was.

Ginsberg: Yeah . . . I went last night and turned on with Mario Savio. Two nights ago . . . After I finished and I was talking with him, and he doesn't turn on very much . . . This was maybe the third or fourth time.

But he was describing his efforts in terms of the motive power for large mass movements. He felt one of the things that move large crowds was righteousness, moral outrage, and ANGER . . . Righteous anger.

Menopausal Minds

Leary: Well, let's stop right here. The implication of that statement is: we want a mass movement. Mass movements make no sense to me, and I want no part of mass movements. I think this is the error that the leftist activists are making. I see them as young men with menopausal minds.

They are repeating the same dreary quarrels and conflicts for power of the thirties and forties, of the trade union movement, of Trotskyism and so forth. I think they should be sanctified, drop out, find their own center, turn on, and above all avoid mass movements, mass leadership, mass followers. I see that there is a great difference—I say completely incompatible difference—between the leftist activist movement and the psychedelic religious movement. In the first place, the psychedelic movement, I think, is much more numerous. But it doesn't express itself as noisily. I think there are different goals. I think that the activists want power. They talk about student power. This shocks me, and alienates my spiritual sensitivities.

Of course, there is a great deal of difference in method. The psychedelic movement, the spiritual seeker movement, or whatever you want to call it, expresses itself . . . as the Haight-Ashbury group had done . . . with flowers and chants and pictures and beads and acts of beauty and harmony . . . sweeping the streets. That sort of thing.

Watts: And giving away free food.

Leary: Yes . . . I think this point must be made straight away, but because we are both looked upon with disfavor by the Establishment, this tendency to group the two together . . . I think that such confusion can only lead to disillusion and hard feelings on someone's part. So, I'd like to lay this down as a premise right at the beginning.

Ginsberg: Well, of course, that's the same premise they lay down, that there is an irreconcilable split. Only, their stereotype of the psychedelic movement is that it's just sort of the opposite . . . I think you're presenting a stereotype of them.

Snyder: I think that you have to look at this historically, and there's no doubt that the historical roots of the revolutionary movements and the historical roots of this spiritual movement are identical. This is something that has been going on since the Neolithic as a strain in human history, and one which has been consistently, on one level or another, opposed to the collectivism of civilization toward the rigidities of the city states and city temples. Christian utopianism is behind Marxism.

Leary: They're outs and they want in.

Utopian, Religious Drive

Snyder: . . .but historically it arrives from a utopian and essentially religious drive. The early revolutionary political movements in Europe have this utopian strain to them.

Then Marxism finally becomes a separate, non-religious movement, but only very late. That utopian strain runs right through it all along. So that we do share this . . .

Ginsberg: What are the early utopian texts? What are the early mystical utopian political texts?

Snyder: Political?

Ginsberg: Yeah. Are you running your mind back through Bakunin or something?

Snyder: I'm running it back to earlier people. To Fourier, and stuff . . .

Watts: Well, it goes back to the seventeenth century and the movements in Flemish and German mysticism, which started up the whole idea of democracy in England in the seventeenth century. You have the Anabaptists, the Levellers, the Brothers of the Free Spirit . . .

Snyder: The Diggers!

Secular Mysticism

Watts: The Diggers, and all those people, and then eventually the Quakers. This was the source. It was, in a way, the secularization of mysticism.

In other words, the mystical doctrine that all men are equal in the sight of God, for the simple reason that they ARE God. They're all God's incarnations. When that doctrine is secularized, it becomes a parody . . .that all men are equally inferior. And therefore may be evil-treated by the bureaucrats and the police, with no manners.

The whole tendency of this equalization of man in the nineteenth century is a result, in a way, of the work of Freud. But the absolute recipe for writing a best-seller biography was to take some person who was renowned for his virtue and probity, and to show, after all, that everything was scurrilous and low down. You see? This became the parody. Because the point that I am making—this may seem to be a little bit of a diversion, but the actual point is this: Whenever the insights one derives from mystical vision become politically active they always create their own opposite. They create a parody.

Wouldn't you agree with that, Tim? I mean, this is the point I think you're saying: that when we try to force a vision upon the world, and say that everybody ought to have this, and it's GOOD for you, then a parody of it is set up. As it was historically when this vision was forced upon the West, that all men are equal in the sight of God and so on and so forth . . .it became bureaucratic democracy, which is that all people are equally inferior.

Snyder: Well, my answer to what Tim was saying there is that, it seems to me at least, in left-wing politics there are certain elements, and there are always going to be certain people who are motivated by the same thing that I'm motivated by.

And I don't want to reject the history, or sacrifices of the people in that movement . . .if they can be brought around to what I would consider a more profound vision of themselves, and a more profound vision of themselves and society . . .

Leary: I think we should get them to drop out, turn on, and tune in.

Ginsberg: Yeah, but they don't know what that means even.

Leary: I know it. No politician, left or right, young or old, knows what we mean by that.

Ginsberg: Don't be so angry!

Leary: I'm not angry . . .

Ginsberg: Yes, you are. Now, wait a minute . . . Everybody in Berkeley, all week long, has been bugging me . . . and Alpert . . . about what you mean by drop out, tune in, and turn on. Finally, one young kid said, "Drop out, turn on, and tune in." Meaning: get with an activity—a manifest activity—worldly activity—that's harmonious with whatever vision he has.

Everybody in Berkeley is all bugged because they think, one: drop-out thing really doesn't mean anything, that what you're gonna cultivate is a lot of freak-out hippies goofing around and throwing bottles through windows when they flip out on LSD. That's their stereotype vision. Obviously stereotype.

Leary: Sounds like bullshitting . . .

The Newspaper Vision

Ginsberg: No, like it's no different from the newspaper vision, anyway. I mean, they've got the newspaper vision.

Then, secondly, they're afraid that there'll be some sort of fascist putsch. Like, it's rumored lately that everyone's gonna be arrested. So that the lack of communicating community among hippies will lead to some concentration camp situation, or lead . . . as it has been in Los Angeles recently . . . to a dispersal of what the beginning of the community began.

Leary: These are the old, menopausal minds. There was a psychiatrist named Adler in San Francisco whose interpretation of the group Be-In was that this is the basis for a new fascism . . . when a leader comes along. And I sense in the activist movement the cry for a leader . . . the cry for organization . . .

Ginsberg: But they're just as intelligent as you are on this fact. They know about what happened in Russia. That's the reason they haven't got a big, active organization.

It's because they, too, are stumped by: How do you have a community, and a community movement, and cooperation within the community to make life more pleasing for everybody—including the end of the Vietnam War? How do you have such a situation organized, or disorganized, just so long as it's effective—without a fascist leadership? Because they don't want to be that either.

See, they are conscious of the fact that they don't want to be messiahs—political messiahs. At least Savio in particular. Yesterday, he was weeping. Saying he wanted to go out and live in nature.

Leary: Beautiful.

Ginsberg: So, I mean he's like basically where we are: stoned.

Genius of Non-Leadership

Watts: Well, I think that thus far, the genius of this kind of underground that we're talking about is that it has no leadership.

Leary: Exactly!

Watts: That everybody recognizes everybody else.

Ginsberg: Right, except that that's not really entirely so.

Watts: Isn't it so? But it is to a great extent now . . .

Ginsberg: There's an organized leadership, say, at such a thing as a Be-In. There is organization; there is community. There are community groups which

cooperate, and those community groups are sparked by active people who don't necessarily parade their names in public, but who are capable people . . . who are capable of ordering sound trucks and distributing thousands of cubes of LSD and getting signs posted.

Watts: Oh yes, that's perfectly true. There are people who can organize things. But they don't assume the figurehead role.

Leary: I would prefer to call them foci of energy. There's no question. You start the poetry, chanting thing . . .

Watts: Yes.

Leary: And I come along with a celebration. Like Allen and Gary at the Be-In.

Nature and Bossism

Watts: And there is nobody in charge as a ruler, and this is the absolutely vital thing. That the Western world has labored for many, many centuries under a monarchical conception of the universe where God is the boss, and political systems and all kinds of law have been based on this model of the universe . . . that nature is run by a boss.

Whereas, if you take the Chinese view of the world, which is organic. They would say, for example, that the human body is an organization in which there is no boss. It is a situation of order resulting from mutual interrelationship of all the parts.

And what we need to realize is that there can be, shall we say, a movement . . . a stirring among people . . . which can be organically designed instead of politically designed. It has no boss. Yet all parts recognize each other in the same way as the cells of the body all cooperate together.

Snyder: Yes, it's a new social structure. It's a new social structure which follows certain kinds of historically known tribal models.

Leary: Exactly, yeah! My historical reading of the situation is that these great, monolithic empires that developed in history—Rome, Turkey and so forth—always break down when enough people (and it's always the young, the creative, and the minority groups) drop out and go back to a tribal form.

I agree with what I've heard you say in the past, Gary, that the basic unit is tribal. What I envision is thousands of small groups throughout the United States and Western Europe, and eventually the world, as dropping out. What happened when Jerusalem fell? Little groups went off together . . .

Ginsberg: Precisely what do you mean by drop out, then . . . again, for the millionth time?

Snyder: Drop out throws me a little bit, Tim. Because it's assumed that we're dropping out. The next step is, now what are we doing where we're in something else? We're in a new society. We're in the seeds of a new society.

Ginsberg: For instance, you haven't dropped out, Tim. You dropped out of your job as a psychology teacher in Harvard. Now, what you've dropped into is, one: a highly complicated series of arrangements for lecturing and for putting on the festival . . .

Leary: Well, I'm dropped out of that.

Ginsberg: But you're not dropped out of the very highly complicated legal constitutional appeal, which you feel a sentimental regard for, as I do. You haven't dropped out of being the financial provider for Millbrook, and you haven't dropped out of planning and conducting community organization and participating in it.

And that community organization is related to the national community, too. Either through the Supreme Court, or through the very existence of the dollar that is exchanged for you to pay your lawyers, or to take money to pay

your lawyers in the theatre. So you can't drop out, like DROP OUT, 'cause you haven't.

Leary: Well, let me explain . . .

Ginsberg: So they think you mean like, drop out, like go live on Haight-Ashbury Street and do nothing at all. Even if you can do something like build furniture and sell it, or give it away in barter with somebody else.

Leary: You have to drop out in a group. You drop out in a small tribal group.

Snyder: Well, you drop out one by one, but . . . You know, you can join the sub-culture.

Ginsberg: Maybe it's: "Drop out of what?"

Watts: Gary, I think you have something to say here. Because you, to me, are one of the most fantastically capable drop-out people I have ever met. I think, at this point, you should say a word or two about your own experience of how to live on nothing. How to get by in life economically.

This is the nitty-gritty. This is where it really comes down to in many people's minds. Where's the bread going to come from if everybody drops out? Now, you know expertly where it's gonna come from—living a life of integrity and not being involved in a commute-necktie-strangle scene.

Snyder: Well, this isn't news to anybody, but ten or fifteen years ago when we dropped out, there wasn't a community. There wasn't anybody who was going to take care of you at all. You were completely on your own.

What it meant was, cutting down on your desires and cutting down on your needs to an absolute minimum; and it also meant, don't be a bit fussy about how you work or what you do for a living.

That meant doing any kind of work. Strawberry picking, carpenter, laborer, longshore . . . Well, longshore is hard to get into. It paid very well. Shipping out . . . that also pays very well.

The Virtue of Patience

But at least in my time, it meant being willing to do any goddamn kind of labor that came your way, and not being fussy about it.

And it meant cultivating the virtue of patience—the patience of sticking with a shitty job long enough to win the bread that you needed to have some more leisure, which meant more freedom to do more things that you wanted to do. And mastering all kinds of techniques of living really cheap . . .

Like getting free rice off the docks, because the loading trucks sometimes fork the rice sacks, and spill little piles of rice on the docks which are usually thrown away.

But I had it worked out with some of the guards down on the docks that they would gather 15 or 25 pounds of rice for me, and also tea . . . I'd pick it up once a week off the docks, and then I'd take it around and give it to friends. This was rice that was going to be thrown away, otherwise. Techniques like that.

Watts: Second day vegetables from the supermarket . . .

Snyder: Yeah, we used to go around at one or two in the morning, around the Safeways and Piggly Wiggles in Berkeley, with a shopping bag, and hit the garbage can out in back. We'd get Chinese cabbage, lots of broccoli and artichokes that were thrown out because they didn't look sellable any more. So, I never bought any vegetables for the three years I was a graduate student at Berkeley. When I ate meat, it was usually horsemeat from the pet store, because they don't have a law that permits them to sell horsemeat for human consumption in California like they do in Oregon.

Ginsberg: You make a delicious horse meat sukiyaki (laughter).

A Sweet, Clean Pad

Watts: Well, I want to add to this, Gary, that during the time you were living this way, I visited you on occasion, and you had a little hut way up on the hillside of Homestead Valley in Mill Valley and I want to say, for the record, that this was one of the most beautiful pads I ever saw. It was sweet and clean, and it had a very, very good smell to the whole thing. You were living what I consider to be a very noble life.

Now, then, the question that next arises, if this is the way of being a successful drop-out, which I think is true . . . Can you have a wife and child under such circumstances?

Snyder: Yeah, I think you can, sure.

Watts: What about when the state forces you to send the child to school?

Snyder: You send it to school.

Leary: Oh no, c'mon, I don't see this as drop-out at all.

Snyder: I want to finish what I was going to say. That's the way it was ten years ago.

Today, there is a huge community. When any kid drops out today, he's got a subculture to go fall into. He's got a place to go where there'll be friends, and people that will feed him—at least for a while—and keep feeding him indefinitely, if he moves around from pad to pad.

Leary: That's just stage one. The value of the Lower East Side, or of the district in Seattle or the Haight-Ashbury, is that it provides a first launching pad.

Everyone that's caught inside a television set of props, and made of actors . . . The first thing that you have to do is completely detach yourself from anything inside the plastic, robot Establishment.

A Way Station: A Launching Pad

The next step—for many people—could well be a place like Haight-Ashbury. There they will find spiritual teachers, there they will find friends, lovers, wives . . .

But that must be seen clearly as a way station. I don't think the Haight-Ashbury district—any city, for that matter—is a place where the new tribal . . .

Snyder: I agree with you. Not in the city.

Leary: . . . is going to live. So, I mean DROP OUT! I don't want to be misinterpreted. I'm dropping out . . . step by step.

Millbrook, by the way, is a tribal community. We're getting closer and closer to the landing . . . We're working out our way of import and export with the planet. We consider ourselves a tribe of mutants. Just like all the little tribes of Indians were. We happen to have our little area there, and we have come to terms with the white men around us.

What Are You Building?

Snyder: Now look . . . Your drop-out line is fine for all those other people out there, you know, that's what you've got to say to them. But, I want to hear what you're building. What are you making?

Leary: What are we building?

Snyder: Yeah, what are you building? I want to hear your views on that. Now, it's agreed we're dropping out, and there are techniques to do it. Now, what next! Where are we going now? What kind of society are we going to be in?

Leary: I'm making the prediction that thousands of groups will just look around the fake-prop-television-set American society, and just open one of those doors.

When you open the doors, they don't lead you in, they lead you OUT into the garden of Eden . . . which is the planet.

Then you find yourself a little tribe wandering around. As soon as enough people do this—young people do this—it'll bring about an incredible change in the consciousness of this country, and of the Western world.

Ginsberg: Well, that is happening actually . . .

Leary: Yeah, but . . .

Snyder: But that garden of Eden is full of old rubber truck tires and tin cans, right now, you know.

Leary: Parts of it are . . . Each group that drops out has got to use its two billion years of cellular equipment to answer those questions: Hey, how we gonna eat? Oh, there's no paycheck, there's no more fellowship from the university! How we gonna eat? How we gonna keep warm? How we gonna defend ourselves? Those are exactly the questions that cellular animals and tribal groups have been asking for thousands of years. Each group is going to have to depend upon its turned on, psychedelic creativity and each group of . . .

I can envision ten M.I.T. scientists, with their families, they've taken LSD . . . They've wondered about the insane-robot-television show of M.I.T. They drop out.

They may get a little farm out in Lexington, near Boston. They may use their creativity to make some new kinds of machines that will turn people on instead of bomb them. Every little group has to do what every little group has done throughout history.

New Structures; New Techniques

Snyder: No, they can't do what they've done through history. What is very important here is, besides taking acid, is that people learn the techniques which have been forgotten. That they learn new structures, and new techniques. Like, you just can't go out and grow vegetables, man. You've got to learn HOW to do it. Like we've gotta learn to do a lot of things we've forgotten to do.

Leary: I agree.

Watts: That is very true, Gary. Our educational system, in its entirety, does nothing to give us any kind of material competence. In other words, we don't learn how to cook, how to make clothes, how to build houses, how to make love, or to do any of the absolutely fundamental things of life.

Cerebral "Freak Outs"

The whole education that we get for our children in school is entirely in terms of abstractions. It trains you to be an insurance salesman or a bureaucrat, or some kind of cerebral character.

Leary: Yes . . . it's exactly there that, I think, a clear-cut statement is needed. The American educational system is a narcotic, addictive process . . .

Watts: Right!

Leary: . . . and we must have NOTHING to do with it. Drop out of school, drop out of college, don't be an activist . . .

Watts: But we've got to do something else.

Leary: Drop OUT of school . . .

Ginsberg: Where are you gonna learn engineering, or astronomy, or anything like that?

Leary: The way men have always learned the important things in life. Face to face with a teacher, with a guru. Because very little . . .

Ginsberg: What about astronomy . . .like calculation of star rations . . .things like that?

Leary: If any drop-out wants to do that, he can do it . . .I can tell him how to do it.

Snyder: I would suspect that within the next ten years—within the next five years probably—a modest beginning will be made in sub-culture institutions of higher learning that will informally begin to exist around the country, and will provide this kind of education without being left to the Establishment, to Big Industry, to government.

Watts: Well, it's already happening . . .

Snyder: I think that there will be a big extension of that, employing a lot of potentially beautiful teachers who are unemployed at the moment . . .like there are gurus who are just waiting to be put to use; and also drawing people, who are working in the universities with a bad conscience, off to join that . . .

Leary: Exactly . . .

Snyder: There's a whole new order of technology that is required for this. A whole new science, actually. A whole new physical science is going to emerge from this. Because the boundaries of the old physical science are within the boundaries of the Judaeo-Christian and Western imperialist boss sense of the universe that Alan was talking about.

In other words, our scientific condition is caught within the limits of that father figure, Jehovah, or Roman emperor . . .which limits our scientific objectivity and actually holds us back from exploring areas of science which can be explored.

Leary: Exactly, Gary. Exactly . . .

Watts: It's like the guy in Los Angeles who had a bad trip on LSD and turned himself into the police, and wrote: "Please help me. Signed, Jehovah"(laughter).

Leary: Beautiful! (more laughter) It's about time he caught on, huh?(more laughter)

Watts: Yes (laughing). But, here though, is this thing, you see. We are really talking about all this, which is really a rather small movement of people, involved in the midst of a fantastic multitude of people who can only continue to survive if automated industry feeds them, clothes them, houses them and transports them. By means of the creation of immense quantities of ersatz material: Fake bread, fake homes, fake clothes and fake autos.

In other words, this thing is going on . . .you know, huge, fantastic numbers of people . . .increasing, increasing, increasing . . .people think the population is something that's going to happen five years from now. They don't realize it's right on us now! People are coming out to the walls!

Snyder: And they're gobbling up everything on the planet to feed it.

Watts: Right.

Snyder: Well, the ecological conscience is something that has to emerge there, and that's part of what we hope for . . .hopefully in the subculture.

Voice from Audience: Gary, doesn't Japan clearly indicate that we can go up in an order of magnitude in population and still . . .

Snyder: Well, who wants to? It can be very well argued by some people who have not been thinking very clearly about it, that we could support a larger number of people on this planet infinitely. But that's irresponsible and sacrilegious. It's sacrilegious for the simple reason it wipes out too many other animal species which we have no right to wipe out.

Leary: Absolutely.

Snyder: We have no moral right to upset the ecological balance.

Watts: No, that's true. We've got to admit that we belong to the mutual eating society.

Snyder: Furthermore, it simply isn't pleasant to be crowded that way. Human beings lose respect for human beings when they're crowded.

Leary: Out of my LSD experiences I have evolved a vision which makes sense to my cells . . . that we are already putting to work at Millbrook. And that is, that life on this planet depends upon about twelve inches of topsoil and the incredible balance of species that Gary was just talking about.

On the other hand, man and his technological, Aristotelian zeal has developed these methods of laying down miles of concrete on topsoil, polluting the waters and doing the damage that Gary was just talking about. Now, we cannot say to this society, "Go back to a simple, tribal, pastoral existence." That's romantic.

Forward

Snyder: You can say, "Go forward to a simple, pastoral existence."

Leary: Yeah. I have come to a very simple solution: All the technology has to go underground. Because metal belongs underground. You take a hatchet out in the forest and let it go. It goes exactly where God and the Divine Process wants it to be: underground.

Now the city of New York—the megalopolis is going to exist from Seattle to San Diego in a few years—could just as well be underground. If it goes underground it's there, where it belongs, with fire and metal and steel.

I foresee that these tribal groups that drop out—and I mean absolutely drop out—will be helping to get back in harmony with the land, and we've got to start immediately putting technology underground.

I can think of different ways we can do this symbolically. The Solstice, last April 21st (*Oracle Editor's Note: March 21st*) a group of us went out in front of the house in Millbrook and we took a sledgehammer and we spent about an hour breaking through the road. And we had this incredible piece of asphalt and rock—about four inches—and then we said: "Hey! Underneath this planet somewhere there's dirt!" It was really magical. And once you get a little piece taken out—it took about an hour to get one little piece—then you just go underneath it and it begins to crumble.

So I think we should start a movement to—one hour a day or one hour a week—take a little chisel and a little hammer and just see some earth come up, and put a little seed there. And then put a little ring—mandalic ring—of something around it.

I can see the highways and I can see the subways and I can see the patios and so forth . . . Suddenly the highway department comes along, and: "There's a rose growing in the middle of Highway 101!" And then . . . then . . . the robot power group will have to send a group of the highway department to kill the rose and put the asphalt down on the gentle, naked skin of the soil.

Now when they do that, we're getting to them. There'll be pictures in the paper. And consciousness is going to change. Because we've got to get to people's consciousness. We've got to let people realize what they're doing to the earth.

Ginsberg: That's the area of poetry you're dealing with there.

Leary: Here we go. I'm the poet and you're the politician. I've told you that for ten years!

Ginsberg: "There are no ideas but in things," said William Carlos Williams. How does this work out now?

Snyder: Technologically?

Voice from Audience: I wouldn't want to work underground.

Leary: Of course not. The only people that would want to work underground are people that would want to work with metal and steel. But if they're hung up that way, and they want to play with those kinds of symbols, fine. We'll have the greatest, air-conditioned, smooth, airport, tile gardens for them with all sorts of metal toys to play with.

Voice from Audience: Can I ask you for a clarification on one thing about drop out? You said that in another ten years the young men in the colleges are going to have degrees and the doctors, psychologists and so on, will all be turned-on people. But if they drop out from college now they won't have degrees and these people won't gain control of the apparatus—I mean, I know someone now at State who studies psychology and who doesn't know whether to drop out or not, and who's pulled in two directions. I think there are many people like this.

To be continued in *Cenacle* / 53 / October 2004



Notes On Contributors

G. C. Dillon lives in Plainville, Connecticut. His story in this issue is a sequel to "The Haunting of Yusif," which appeared in *Cenacle* 46, June 2001. His is a welcomed return to these pages.

Allen Ginsberg was born in Paterson, New Jersey in 1926 and lived in many places over the course of his life, and wrote poetry & railed for better days & finer human relations during most of them. He is most famously known for his poem "Howl," but his work bears a greater range than just that one great poem.

Judih Haggai lives at Kibbutz Nir Oz in Israel. Her poetry has been featured regularly in recent issues of *The Cenacle*. Scriptor Press happily anticipates publishing a book of her work in the summer of 2004.

Kassandra Kramer lived in Omaha, Nebraska when the work on this issue commenced, and has since moved along very nicely to Seattle, Washington.

Timothy Leary was born in Springfield, Massachusetts in 1920. He was called in his time the High Priest of LSD, and pursued this advocacy with zeal, good humor, depth, irony, and more seriousness than he is often given credit for.

Gary Snyder was born in 1930 in San Francisco, California but grew up in the Pacific Northwest and pursued poetry & Zen philosophy as vocations. He was onstage during the Great Human Be-In in San Francisco in January 1967.

Raymond Souland, Jr. lived in Plainville, Connecticut when the work on this issue commenced, and has since escaped safely to the Green Coast and the friendly, freaky environs of Seattle, Washington. YAHHHHHH!!!!!!

Alan Watts was born in England in 1915 and became widely recognized for his Zen writings and for the book *On the Taboo Against Knowing Who You Are*.



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